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NEW WRITING



NEW WRITING is published twice a year

NEW WRITING

Edited by
JOHN LEHMANN

with the assistance of
CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD
STEPHEN SPENDER

NEW SERIES

II

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*Chosen and arranged with the assistance of Humphrey
Spender*

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS



W. H. AUDEN, well-known young poet and dramatist, has contributed on several previous occasions to *New Writing*, notably *Poem* to No. 3 and *Two Ballads* to No. 4. He has just written a book about China, with Christopher Isherwood, *Journey to a War*.

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE is a young French writer and philosopher, author of a remarkable novel *La Nausée*, and a book of short stories, *Le Mur*, from which the present contribution is taken.

E. FERNANDEZ is a young Spaniard who fought on the Republican side. The story here translated is taken from *Hora de España*, and is an authentic account of war experiences.

EWART MILNE was born in Dublin in 1903, of an English father and Irish mother. He has been a teacher, and a sailor before the mast. Early in the Spanish Civil War he volunteered for the Medical Aid, with which he has been working ever since. He has published a number of articles, stories and poems.

T. C. WORSLEY is 31, has been a schoolmaster, and drove an ambulance in Republican Spain during the spring of 1937. He contributed *A Boy's Love* to *New Writing* No. 4 and has just completed a novel.

CLIVE BRANSON volunteered for the Spanish Republicans, and was captured by the Italians and imprisoned in the camp at San Pedro.

TOM WINTRINGHAM, served in the Great War and the Spanish Civil War. He was one of the original editors of *Left Review*. He contributed a number of poems to the anthology *Poems for Spain*, and has just published a book about his experiences in Spain, *English Captain*.

HEINRICH DUERMAYER was an officer of a machine-gun company in the Chapaev Battalion of the International Brigade. His account of the young Viennese Communist's death is a true story, first published in *Das Bataillon der 21 Nationen*, edited by Alfred Kantorowicz.

G. F. GREEN was born twenty-six years ago in North Derbyshire. He went to Cambridge, and has since occupied himself with the writing of short stories, one of which, *The Recruit*, was published in *New Writing* No. 3, and another, *One Boy's Town*, in No. 5.

LESLIE HALWARD, author of *Arch Anderson* in *New Writing* No. 4, was born in Birmingham thirty-four years ago. He started work at the age of fifteen, and has been die-sinker, toolmaker, labourer, and plasterer. He began to write seriously in 1932 when on the dole, and published his first collection of short stories, *To Tea on Sunday*, in 1936.

ANDRÉ CHAMSON, whose stories have appeared in *New Writing* since the beginning, formerly edited the Parisian *Front Populaire* weekly, *Vendredi*. The first Tabusse stories appeared in No. 5.

BEATRIX LEHMANN is well known as an actress, particularly for the part of Vinny in *Mourning Becomes Electra*. She was born in 1903, and very early on in her life conceived a passion for the stage. In the intervals of theatrical and film work she has published two novels, and contributed *The Two Thousand Pound Raspberry* to *New Writing*, No. 5.

GORONWY REES was born in 1909 in Cardiganshire. His father was a Welsh Methodist Minister. He is a Fellow of All Souls, has published two novels, and has worked as a journalist on *The Times*, *Manchester Guardian* and *Spectator*.

BERTOLT BRECHT is the German poet and dramatist who became famous after the Great War as a satirist of society, and now is forced to live in exile on account of his pacifist and anti-imperialist views.

ANDRÉ VAN GYSEGHEM was born in London in 1906, and was producer at the Embassy Theatre from 1931 to 1934. He then spent a year in Moscow studying the Soviet Theatre, and has since worked as a producer of plays and pageants in South Africa as well as England.

BERTHOLD VIERTEL is an exiled German writer, theatrical and film director, now living in England. He was born in Vienna, and became well known there and in Berlin for his original productions of plays. He has published several volumes of poetry and writes, among other papers, for *Die Neue Weltbuehne*. He worked for some years in Hollywood.

DESMOND CLARKE was born in Dublin in 1907, and has been writing anything and everything since the age of sixteen. He is at present preparing a volume of short stories and a novel.

H. A. CARTER is twenty-four years old, and lives in a mining district of Derbyshire. He entered local government service eight years ago. He has previously had two stories published, and is now working on a novel.

JIM PHELAN is a young Irish author, who wrote *Lifer*, a novel about prisons, and *Green Volcano*, a novel of the Irish fight for freedom and independence.

H. B. MALLALIEU is twenty-four years old, lives at Croydon, and works as a journalist. He has contributed poems to many English periodicals, and one to *New Writing*, No. 4.

DAVID GASCOYNE was born in 1916, and published his first novel, *Opening Day*, at the age of 16. Since then he has published many poems in anthologies and reviews, and is the author of *A Short Survey of Surrealism*. Recently he has lived in Paris and made a special study of modern French literature.

R. P. HEWETT is a young writer, who published his first book of poems a few years ago, and has since been preparing a novel and a number of new lyrics.

GEOFFREY PARSONS was born in 1910, and has had poems published in various periodicals. He wrote the song lyrics for Unity Theatre's first pantomime *Babes in the Wood*.

CLIFFORD DYMENT was born in 1914, and has published two books of poems as well as short stories in various periodicals. He contributed a story, *The Departure*, to *New Writing* No. 3.

KENNETH ALLOTT is twenty-six years old and lives in London, where he works as joint-editor of *New Verse*. He was educated at King's College, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and St. Edmund's Hall, Oxford. His work has appeared in many periodicals, and his first book of poems was published in 1938.

ROBERT WALLER, author of *The Man Who Quacked* in No. 5, is twenty-five years old, and has worked as warehouse clerk, commercial traveller in stamp albums, and tobacconist's assistant. He now devotes himself to writing short stories and poems in the intervals of working as a private secretary.

JUGAL KISHORE SHUKLA is one of a growing group of new Indian progressive writers. *One Day* is his first story to be translated and published in England.

ANONYMOUS. Among the more primitive peoples in the U.S.S.R. there is already a popular literature of legend about Lenin and the Revolution. The Evenks live in the Siberian forests, known as the Taiga.

TOM HARRISON, leader of Mass-Observation, was born in a thunderstorm at Buenos Aires twenty-seven years ago. After studying native and cannibal life on many expeditions to remote parts of the world, he decided to study English life in the same way.

RODNEY GALLOP was born in 1901 and spent most of his childhood in the French Basque country. He works in the Diplomatic Service, and has devoted his spare time to travel and observation of popular customs. He has published books on the Basques, on Portugal and Mexico.

JEAN GONO was born at Manosque, in France, where he has lived most of his life. He has for many years written short stories and longer prose works of a unique character about country life. He contributed *The Corn Dies* to *New Writing* No. 3. The present story is taken from *Les Vraies Richesses*.

HUGH MACDIARMID, well-known Scottish poet and author of *First Hymn to Lenin* and *Second Hymn to Lenin*, was born in 1892. He is at present editor of *The Voice of Scotland*, a quarterly magazine devoted to Scottish workers' Republicanism.

F. C. WEISKOPF is a German writer who lived in Prague for some time, and is now an exile in Paris. While in Czecho-Slovakia he devoted much time to the study of the life and literature of the Eastern parts of the now obliterated Republic.

W. H. AUDEN

EIGHT POEMS

I

THE CAPITAL

QUARTER of pleasures where the rich are always waiting,
Waiting expensively for miracles to happen,
O little restaurants where the lovers eat each other,
Café where exiles establish a malicious village:

You with your charm and your apparatus abolish
The strictness of winter and the spring's compulsion;
Far from your lights the outraged punitive father;
The dullness of mere obedience here is apparent.

But with orchestras and glances, O, you betray us
To belief in our infinite powers: and the innocent
Unobservant offender falls in a moment
Victim to the heart's invisible fury.

In unlighted streets you hide away the appalling:
Factories where lives are made for a temporary use
Like collars or chairs; rooms where the lonely are battered
Slowly like pebbles into fortuitous shapes.

But the sky you illumine; your glow is visible far
Into the dark countryside, the enormous, the frozen;
Where, hinting at the forbidden like a wicked uncle,
Night after night to the farmer's children you beckon.

II

BRUSSELS IN WINTER

WANDERING the cold streets tangled like old string,
Coming on fountains silent in the frost,
The city still escapes you: it has lost
The qualities that say: 'I am a Thing.'

Only the homeless and the really humbled
 Seem to be sure exactly where they are,
 And in their suffering are all assembled;
 The winter holds them like the Opera.

Like alps the rich apartments tower to-night,
 Where isolated windows glow like farms;
 A phrase goes packed with meaning like a van;

A look contains the history of man;
 And fifty francs will earn the stranger right
 To warm the heartless city in his arms.

III

GARE DU MIDI

A NONDESCRIPT express in from the south;
 Crowds round the ticket barrier; a face
 To welcome which the mayor has not contrived
 Bugles or brass: something about the mouth
 Disturbs the stray look with alarm and pity.
 Snow is falling; clutching his little case,
 He walks out briskly to infect a city
 Whose terrible future may have just arrived.

IV

PALAIS DES BEAUX ARTS

ABOUT suffering they were never wrong,
 The Old Masters: how well they understood
 Its human position; how it takes place
 While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking
 dully along;
 How, when the aged are reverently passionately waiting
 For the miraculous birth there always must be
 Children, who did not specially want it to happen, skating
 On a pond at the edge of the wood:
 They never forgot
 That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course
 Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot

Where the dogs go on with their doggy life, and the torturer's horse
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

In Breughel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone,
As it had to, on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
Had somewhere to get to, and sailed calmly on.

V

RIMBAUD

THE nights, the railway arches, the bad sky,
His horrible companions, did not know it;
But in that child the rhetorician's lie
Burst like a pipe: the cold had made a poet.

Drink, bought him by his weak and lyric friend,
His senses systematically deranged,
To all accepted nonsense put an end,
Till he from lyre and weakness was estranged.

Verse was a special illness of the ear;
Integrity was not enough—that seemed
The hell of childhood; he must try again:

Now, galloping in Africa, he dreamed
Of a new self, a son, the engineer,
His truth acceptable to lying men.

VI

A. E. HOUSMAN

No one, not even Cambridge, was to blame;
Blame, if you like, the human situation
Heart-injured in North London, he became
The leading classic of his generation.

Deliberately he chose the dry-as-dust,
 Kept tears like dirty postcards in a drawer;
 Food was his candid love, his secret lust
 Something to do with violence and the poor.

In savage footnotes on unjust editions
 He timidly attacked the life he led,
 And put the money of his feelings on

The uncritical relations of the dead,
 Where purely geographical divisions
 Parted the coarse hanged soldier from the don.

VII

THE NOVELIST

ENCASED in talent like a uniform,
 The rank of every poet is well known;
 They can amaze us like a thunderstorm,
 Or die so young, or live for years alone;

They can dash forward like hussars: but he
 Must struggle out of his boyish gift, and learn
 How to be plain and backward, how to be
 One after whom none think it worth to turn.

For, to achieve his lightest wish, he must
 Become the whole of boredom; subject to
 Vulgar complaints like love; among the Just

Be just; among the Filthy filthy too;
 And in his own weak person, if he can,
 Must suffer dully all the wrongs of man.

VIII

THE COMPOSER

ALL the others translate: the painter sketches
 A visible world to love or reject;
 Rummaging into his living, the poet fetches
 The images out that hurt and connect;

From Life to Art by painstaking adaption,
Relying on us to cover the rift:
Only your notes are pure contraption,
Only your song is an absolute gift.

Pour out your presence, O delight, cascading
The fall of the knee and the weirs of the spine!
You alone can fly like the bird evading

The earth; you alone, O imaginary song,
Are unable to say an existence is wrong,
And pour out your forgiveness like a wine.

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

THE ROOM

Translated from the French by John Rodker.

THE THERE was a piece of Turkish Delight in Madame Darbédat's fingers. Carefully she bore it to her lips, holding her breath lest she should scatter the fine sugary dust with which it was coated. 'It's a pink one,' she thought. Suddenly she bit into the glassy flesh, and a perfume of stagnation filled her mouth. 'It's odd how being ill intensifies one's sensations.' And she began to think of mosques, obsequious Orientals (she had spent her honeymoon in Algiers), and a faint smile parted her pale lips. There was something obsequious about Turkish Delight.

Yet, in spite of her care, she had to rub her palm over the pages of her book, because the fine powder now sprinkled them, the tiny specks rolling, gritting and sliding over the smooth paper as she rubbed them with her hands. 'They remind me of Arcachon, reading on the beach.' It was there she had spent the summer in 1907. In those days she wore a large straw hat trimmed with green ribbon. She used to ensconce herself near the pier with a novel by Gyp or Colette Yver. The wind sent cascades of sand showering over her knees, and now and again she would shake her book as she held it by the corners. It was the very same feeling, but the grains of sand had been dry, whereas these specks of sugar stuck slightly to her fingers. Again she saw a strip of pearly sky over a dark sea. 'Eve hadn't been born then.' She felt heavy with memories, precious as a sandal-wood box. Suddenly, she remembered the name of the book she had been reading. *The Little Madam* it was called: it was a bit boring really! Now since this nameless illness had kept her to her room, Madame Darbédat preferred Memoirs or books on history. She hoped that her suffering, serious reading, an unremitting attention to her loveliest memories, plus those sensations from which she derived the acutest pleasure, would make her ripen like some fine hot-house fruit.

Then, somewhat irritably, she thought that her husband would soon knock at the door. On other days of the week, he only appeared towards night, silently kissed her brow and sat in the arm-chair reading *Le Temps*. But Thursday was his 'day': when he spent an hour at his

daughter's, usually from three to four. Before he left he looked in on his wife, and they would talk bitterly of their son-in-law. These Thursday talks, predictable to their minutest details, wore her out. The quiet room became filled with his presence. He never sat down, stalked to and fro, swung suddenly round. Every outburst pierced her like a glass splinter. This Thursday, it was worse than usual: the thought that she would soon have to recount what Eve had confessed to her, see his large terrifying body bound in fury, made her break out in a sweat. She took a lump of Turkish Delight from the saucer, gazed at it dubiously for a moment, then sadly laid it aside: she did not like her husband to see her eating Turkish Delight.

She started when the knock came, and in a weak voice said, 'Come in.'

M. Darbédat walked in on tip-toe.

'I'm going to see Eve,' he said, as he did every Thursday.

Mme Darbédat smiled at him.

'Kiss her for me.'

M. Darbédat did not reply, and an anxious wrinkle lined his brow. Every Thursday at about this time, the same deep-seated irritation seemed to add to the weight inside his stomach.

'I'll drop in on Franchot after I've seen her. I'd like him to have a serious talk with her; do his best to convince her.'

He frequently visited Dr. Franchot. But vainly. Mme Darbédat raised her brows. In the past, when she had been well, she had quite liked shrugging her shoulders. But since this illness had thickened her body, such gestures, which would have tired her too much, were now replaced by facial expressions, and she would say 'Yes' with her eyes or the corners of her lips: now she raised her brows instead of her shoulders.

'It ought to be possible to remove him by force.'

'I've already told you that it's impossible. Besides, the law's such a muddle. Franchot was telling me the other day that they've incredible bothers with the families: people who can't make their minds up: who insist on keeping their sick ones at home. The doctors have their hands tied. They can give their advice, but that's all. He'd have to get into some trouble in public, or else she herself would have to apply to have him shut up.'

'And that,' said Mme Darbédat, 'isn't happening to-morrow.'

'No.'

Turning to the mirror, he began combing his beard through his fingers. There was no affection in the glance that rested on the powerful red neck of her husband.

'If she goes on,' said M. Darbédat, 'she'll get crazier than he is: it's horribly unhealthy. She won't let him out of her sight for a moment, she never goes anywhere except to see you, nobody visits them. The air in their room is simply unbreatheable. She never opens the window because Pierre won't have it. As if a sick man ought to be asked! They must burn incense, I imagine; some sort of filth in an incense burner: it's like being in church. 'Pon my honour, I sometimes wonder . . . there's such an expression at times in her eyes. . . .'

'I haven't noticed,' said Mme Darbédat, 'she seems all right to me. She looks depressed, naturally. . . .'

'She looks half dead to me. Is she sleeping? Eating? You can't ask her a thing. But with a chap like Pierre there all the time, I don't suppose she sleeps a wink.' He shrugged his shoulders. 'But what seems so incredible to me, is that we, her parents, haven't the right to protect her from herself. Not to mention that Pierre would be better off at Franchot's. There's a huge garden. Besides, it seems to me,' he added, smiling slightly, 'that he'd get on better with his own sort. Those sort of people are like kids, they ought to be kept together, like freemasons, as you might say. That's where he should have gone from the beginning, and in my opinion, for his own sake. For his own sake, absolutely!'

And after a moment he added: 'Yes, I must say I don't like the idea of her being alone with him, especially at night. I'm always fancying something will happen. He looks so horribly sly.'

'I don't know,' said Mme Darbédat, 'if you're justified in feeling so upset, seeing that he's always looked so. He always seemed to be poking fun at us all. Poor fellow,' she went on, sighing, 'to have been as proud as he was, and to have come to this. He thought he was cleverer than us all. He had a way of saying "You're right," that shut one up immediately. . . . It's a blessing for him he can't see the state he's in . . .'

Sourly, she remembered that long sarcastic face of his, the head always a little bent to one side. In the early days of Eve's marriage, Mme Darbédat would have asked nothing better than to be friendly with him. But he had discouraged her efforts, hardly spoke, and always agreed in a hurry with a distant look in his eyes.

M. Darbédat went on with his thoughts.

'Franchot showed me over his place,' he said. 'It's magnificent. The patients have separate rooms, each with a leather arm-chair, if you please, and divan beds. There's a tennis court, you know, and they're going to make a swimming pool.'

He had planted himself in front of the window, and gazed through the panes, as he swayed slightly on braced legs. Suddenly, he pirouetted on his heels, with his shoulders hunched and his hands in his pockets as though ready to spring. Mme Darbédat felt she was going to break out into a sweat. It was always the same: now he would begin stalking to and fro like a caged bear, his shoes creaking at every step.

‘My dear,’ she said, ‘I implore you, sit down: you wear me out.’ And hesitatingly, she added, ‘I’ve something serious to say to you.’

M. Darbédat sat down in the arm-chair, and placed his hands on his knees: a slight shudder ran down Mme Darbédat’s spine: the moment had come, she would have to say it.

‘You know,’ she said, with an embarrassed cough, ‘that Tuesday I saw Eve.’

‘Yes?’

‘We gossiped about all sorts of things, she was very sweet: it must be ages since she was so open with me. Well, I began asking her this and that, made her talk about Pierre. And do you know,’ she added, with fresh embarrassment, ‘I discovered that he meant *everything* to her.’

‘Well, don’t I damn well know it!’ said M. Darbédat.

Really, he was beginning to exasperate her a little. One always had to explain everything so carefully to him, dot all the *i*’s. Mme Darbédat dreamt of a life spent among subtle, sensitive beings, who would have understood her at a nod.

‘But I mean,’ she went on, ‘in another way than the one we imagine.’

M. Darbédat’s eyes rolled in his head with anxiety and fury, as always whenever he could not grasp some reference or bit of news.

‘What do you mean by that?’

‘Charles,’ said Mme Darbédat, ‘don’t wear me out. You ought to know that a mother may find it painful to say certain things.’

‘I don’t understand a blessed word of all you’re saying,’ said M. Darbédat angrily. ‘Still, you don’t mean to say . . .’

‘Well yes! I do!’ she said.

‘They still . . . even now?’

‘Yes, yes, yes!’ she answered irritably, with three short, sharp nods.

M. Darbédat spread wide his arms, lowered his head, and said nothing.

‘Charles,’ she said, disquieted, ‘I shouldn’t have told you. But I couldn’t keep silent about a thing like that.’

‘Our child . . .’ he said slowly, ‘with that madman? He doesn’t even recognize her any more, he calls her Agatha. She must have

lost all sense of pride.' He raised his head and looked sternly at his wife.

'You're sure you've got it right?'

'I couldn't have made a mistake. I was like you,' she added quickly. 'I could hardly believe my ears: still I don't understand what she can be about. Why, the very idea of being touched by that poor wretch . . . well,' she sighed, 'I suppose that's how he's got his hold over her. . . .'

'Alas!' said M. Darbédat. 'You remember what I told you when he came to ask for her hand? I said then "I believe he's too pleasing to Eve," but you wouldn't believe me.'

Suddenly he struck the table with his hand and flushed purple.

'It's pure perversion, that's what it is. He hugs her and kisses her and calls her Agatha, while he trots out all his tomfoolery about flying statues, and God knows what all else! And she puts up with it. But what keeps them together like this? She might be as sorry for him as she likes, or have him sent to a home where she could visit him every day: that would be all right. But I could never have imagined. . . I thought of her as a widow. . . . Listen, Jeannette,' he said gravely, 'I'm going to talk frankly to you. Well, if she needs that sort of thing, I would even rather she had a lover!'

'Charles, you mustn't!' cried Mme Darbédat.

M. Darbédat, with an air of discouragement, took from the stand, the hat and stick he had laid down on entering.

'After what you've just told me,' he concluded, 'I haven't much hope left. Anyway, I'll talk to her just the same, it's my duty.'

Mme Darbédat anxiously awaited his departure.

'You know,' she said, to cheer him up, 'I think that, whatever we may say, there's more obstinacy in Eve . . . than the other thing. She knows he's incurable, but she's determined not to give way: she won't admit she's been wrong.'

M. Darbédat was stroking his beard dreamily.

'Obstinacy? Yes, perhaps! Well, if you're right, she'll end by getting tired of it. He isn't always very easy to get on with, and besides, he's nothing to talk about. When I say "Hullo" to him, he sticks out a limp hand and says not a word. When they're alone, I imagine he sinks back into his obsessions: she tells me he sometimes starts yelling like a lunatic because of the hallucinations he has. Statues! They fill him with fear, because of the humming they make. He says they fly all around, showing the whites of their eyes.'

He pulled on his gloves, and went on: 'She'll get tired of it, I don't deny. But if she goes off the rails first herself? I wish she'd go out a

bit, see people: she might meet some nice young man—ah, someone perhaps like that Shroeder, the engineer at Simpsons, someone with a future in front of him: she'd see him a bit here, a bit there, and gradually get used to the idea of remaking her life.'

Madame Darbédat did not reply for fear of starting up a new conversation. Her husband bent over her.

'Well, well!' he said, 'I've got to be going.'

'Good-bye, Daddy,' said Mme Darbédat, putting up her brow. 'Give her a good hug, and tell her from me she's a poor darling.'

When her husband had gone, Mme Darbédat let herself sink back into her arm-chair, and shut her eyes, exhausted. 'What vitality,' she thought with reproach. When she felt a little stronger, still with shut eyes, her pallid hand groped gently out to the saucer, and picked up a piece of Turkish Delight.

Eve and her husband lived on the fifth floor of an old building in the rue du Bac. Lightly, M. Darbédat climbed up the hundred and twelve stairs. When he pressed the door bell, he was not even breathless. With satisfaction, he reminded himself of what Mlle Dormoy had once said to him: 'For your age, Charles, you're simply miraculous.' He never felt as strong, as well, as on Thursdays, especially after darting up these stairs.

It was Eve who opened the door to him. Of course, they haven't a maid. They simply *can't* keep them, and I don't wonder. He kissed her:

'Hullo, my poor one!'

She greeted him with a certain coldness.

'You look a little off-colour,' said M. Darbédat, touching her cheek: 'You don't take enough exercise.'

A silence followed.

'Is Mamma all right?' asked Eve.

'So so! You saw her Tuesday? Well, that's how she always is. Your Aunt Louise was visiting her yesterday, she was glad of the visit. She likes seeing people but she gets quickly tired. Aunt Louise came up about those mortgages, I think I mentioned it to you before. She brought the children. It's a funny business. She came to the office to ask my advice. I told her she'd practically no alternative, that she'd have to sell. Anyway, she's found a buyer: Bretonnel. You remember him, don't you? He's retired now.'

He stopped suddenly. Eve was barely listening to him. Sadly he thought 'nothing interests her now! Like books! Once he had had to drag her away from them. Now she did not read any more.'

'How's Pierre?'

'Well!' said Eve. 'Would you like to see him?'

'Why, of course,' said M. Darbédat gaily. 'I'll pop in for a minute.'

He was full of pity for the *wretched* young man, but he could not see him without repulsion. 'I detest ill people.' Of course, it wasn't Pierre's fault, he had a frightfully bad heredity. M. Darbédat sighed. 'In spite of all one's precautions, one always gets to know things too late. No, it wasn't Pierre's fault. Still, the seeds had always been in him, it was the fundamental thing about him. It wasn't like cancer or T.B.: those you could always set aside in judging a man. But that vivid charm, that swift response, which had so taken Eve when they were courting, had in fact been the flowers of madness. He was mad already when they were married, but then it wasn't perceptible.

'You can't help wondering,' thought M. Darbédat, 'where the responsibility begins—or rather, where it ends. Whichever way, he was too much given to self-analysis. All the time turned in on himself. But is that the cause or effect of his disease?' He followed his daughter through a long dark passage.

'This flat is too big for you,' he said, 'you ought to move.'

'You always tell me that, Daddy,' answered Eve, 'but I've already told you that Pierre doesn't want to give up his room.'

She was really incredible! One wondered at times whether she realized her husband's condition. He was raving mad, and yet she respected his wishes and opinions, as though he still had his sanity.

'But what I'm saying's meant for you,' went on M. Darbédat, in some irritation. 'It seems to me that if I were a woman, I should feel afraid in these old badly-lit rooms. What I should like to see you in, is one of those bright new flats that they've been building out at Auteuil: three small airy rooms. They've been reducing the rents, because of the difficulty of finding tenants: this is just the moment for you.'

Eve turned the door handle softly, and they went into the room. A heavy odour of incense caught him by the throat. The curtains were drawn. In the darkness he became aware of a thin neck rising from the back of an arm-chair. Pierre's back was turned, and he was eating.

'Hullo, Pierre,' said M. Darbédat, raising his voice. 'Well! And how are we to-day?'

M. Darbédat went closer: the invalid was sitting up to a little table: there was a sly expression on his face.

'Ah, we've been eating boiled eggs,' said M. Darbédat, raising his voice. 'Was it good, eh?'

‘I’m not deaf,’ said Pierre softly.

M. Darbédat, annoyed, turned to Eve, to call her to witness. But Eve looked at him sternly and said nothing. M. Darbédat realized he had pained her. ‘Well, so much the worse for her.’ It was impossible to hit the right note with the wretched creature: he hadn’t the intelligence of a child of four, and yet Eve wanted one to treat him like a grown-up. M. Darbédat could not prevent himself impatiently wishing the moment would come when all these idiotic precautions would no longer be necessary. Invalids always irritated him somewhat—and especially madmen, because they were wrong. Poor Pierre, for instance, was wrong all along the line: he never spoke without talking nonsense, and yet one couldn’t expect even the humblest apology, not even the least admission he was wrong.

Eve took away the egg shells and egg cup, then put down a knife and fork.

‘And what’s he going to eat now?’ said M. Darbédat jovially.

‘A steak.’

Pierre had picked up the fork, and was holding it in his long pale finger-tips. Minutely he inspected it, then lightly laughed.

‘It won’t be this time,’ he murmured, replacing it, ‘I had a warning.’

Eve moved over, and gazed at the fork with an intense scrutiny.

‘Agatha,’ said Pierre, ‘give me another.’

Eve obeyed, and Pierre began eating. She had taken the suspect fork, and was holding it, clenched in her hand, her eyes still fixed on it. She seemed as though making a violent effort. ‘How shady everything they do, and everything about them seems,’ thought M. Darbédat. He felt very uncomfortable.

‘Look out,’ said Pierre, ‘you must hold it by the middle, because of the claws!’

Eve sighed, and laid the fork on the sideboard. M. Darbédat felt his anger beginning to get the better of him. He did not think it a good thing to humour all the fantasies of this poor wretch; even for Pierre’s sake it was a bad thing to do. Hadn’t Franchot himself said:

‘One should never humour a madman’s illusions.’ Instead of giving him another fork, it would have been better to reason gently with him, and make him see that the first was exactly like the others. He went up to the sideboard, ostentatiously picked up the fork, and ran a finger lightly over the prongs. Then he turned to Pierre. But the latter was peacefully cutting his meat, and looked at his father-in-law calmly and without expression.

‘I should like to have a little chat with you,’ said M. Darbédat to Eve. Eve followed him docilely into the drawing-room. As he sat on

the sofa, M. Darbédat saw that the fork was still in his hand, and threw it ill-humouredly down on a table.

‘It’s better here,’ he said.

‘I’m never in it!’

‘May I smoke?’

‘Of course, Daddy,’ she said eagerly. ‘Would you like a cigar?’

M. Darbédat preferred making himself a cigarette. He thought, not unpleasurably, of the talk they were going to have. In talking about Pierre, he felt embarrassed by his reason, as a giant might be of his strength in play with a child. Clear-sighted, direct and meticulous as he was, these things were now against him. ‘With my poor Jeannette, I must confess, it’s something of the same thing.’ Of course, Madame Darbédat wasn’t mad, but her illness had . . . dulled her. Eve, on the other hand, took after her father; her nature was forthright and logical: discussion with her became a pleasure. ‘That’s why I don’t want her ruined for me.’ M. Darbédat raised his eyes: he wanted to see his daughter’s clever, subtle features again. But he was disappointed: the face that was once so rational, so open, now in some way seemed clouded and shut. Eve had always been very beautiful, and M. Darbédat noticed that she had made herself up with infinite care, ceremonially even. She had put blue on her lids, and blacked her long lashes. The elaborate care of this make-up, made a painful impression on her father.

‘You’re green under your make-up,’ he said to her. ‘I’m afraid you’ll make yourself ill. And how you lay it on nowadays, when you always used such a little.’

Eve made no reply, and M. Darbédat gazed for a moment with embarrassment at the striking worn face, under its masses of dark hair. He thought she looked like an actress. ‘Yes, that’s exactly what she does resemble. That woman, that Rumanian who acted in *Phedra* in the arena at Orange.’ He regretted having made such an unpleasant remark. ‘It escaped me. Better not upset her about such little things.’

‘I’m sorry,’ he said smiling. ‘You know I’m an old simple-lifer. I don’t much care for all those greases that women nowadays stick on their faces. But I know I’m wrong. We must go with the times.’

Eve smiled at him amiably. M. Darbédat lit his cigarette and took a few puffs.

‘My child,’ he began, ‘I was going to say, let’s have a chat, we two, like old times. Come, sit down, and listen to me nicely. You must trust your old Daddy.’

‘I’d rather stay standing,’ said Eve. ‘What was it you wanted to say?’

'I want to ask you a simple question,' said M. Darbédat, a little more drily. 'Where's all this leading you to?'

'All this?' repeated Eve in astonishment.

'Well yes, all, all this life you've made for yourself. Listen,' he went on, 'you mustn't think I don't understand you' (a sudden inspiration had come to him). 'But what you're trying to do is beyond human powers. You're trying to live in a purely imaginary world, aren't you? You won't admit he's ill, you refuse to see Pierre as he is to-day, isn't that so? All you can see is the Pierre you used to know. My darling child, my little one, it's a wager that no one could keep,' went on M. Darbédat. 'Here, I'll tell you a story that perhaps you don't know. When we were at Sables d'Olonne, you were three at the time, your mother struck up a friendship with a charming young woman who had a magnificent little boy. You used to play on the beach with this little chap, you were both of you as high as sixpenn'orth of ha'pence, you were sweethearts together. Some time after, in Paris, your mother thought she would like to meet this young woman again, and that was how she got to know that something frightful had happened; her lovely baby boy had had his head cut off by the front wing of a motor. Your mother was told she might visit her, but above all, she was not to refer to the death of her child, for the woman refused to believe he was dead. Your mother went along to see her, and found a half crazed creature living as though the baby was still alive: she used to talk to him, lay his place at the table. Well, she was in such a state of nervous tension all the time, that six months later they had to remove her forcibly to a Home, and there she remained for three years. No, my child,' said M. Darbédat, shaking his head, 'these things are not possible. It would have been better for her to have admitted the truth to herself courageously. She would have suffered frightfully, of course, but then time would have done its healing work. There's nothing like looking things in the face, take my word for it!'

'You're mistaken,' said Eve, with difficulty. 'I know very well that Pierre is . . .'

The word remained unspoken. She stood rigid, resting her hands on the back of an arm-chair. There was something parched and ugly in the lower part of her face.

'Well, what?' asked M. Darbédat in astonishment.

'What?'

'You . . .?'

'I love him as he is,' said Eve quickly, and with an air of embarrassment.

'It isn't true,' M. Darbédat said violently. 'It isn't true. You don't love him, you can't love him. One can only have such feelings for someone who is normal, sane. What you feel for Pierre is pity, I'm sure, and no doubt there's the memory of the three years' happiness you owe him. But don't tell me you love him, for I won't believe you.'

Eve remained silent, gazing absently at the carpet.

'You might at least reply,' said M. Darbédat coldly. 'Don't think this conversation is any less painful to me, than it must be to you.'

'But you wouldn't believe me anyway!'

'Well then, if you love him,' he cried out in exasperation, 'it's a great misfortune for you, for me, and for your poor mother, because I'm going to tell you something I'd rather have kept hidden: in three years from now Pierre will have become completely demented. He'll be no better than a brute.'

He looked at his daughter with hard eyes, full of resentment because she had forced him, by her obstinacy, to make a revelation so painful to her.

Eve did not flinch: she did not even raise her eyes.

'I know.'

'Who told you?' he asked in stupefaction.

'Franchot. I've known it for six months.'

'And I, who begged him not to alarm you,' said M. Darbédat bitterly. 'Still, perhaps it's better this way. But, given the situation, you must realize that it would be unpardonable to keep Pierre here. The struggle you've embarked on is doomed to fail: his illness must take its course. If there were anything to be done, if you could save him by your efforts, I don't say. But think! You were pretty, intelligent, gay: and you're destroying yourself to please yourself and help no one. Well, of course, you've been wonderful, but there you are, it's over, you've done your duty, more than your duty: and now, as things are, it would be immoral to persist. One also has one's duties towards oneself, my child. Besides, you give no thought to us. The thing to do,' he went on, hammering out the words, 'is for you to put Pierre in Dr. Franchot's Home. You'll give up this flat, where you've never been anything but wretched, and come back home. If you feel you want to be useful, relieve the sufferings of others, well, there's your mother. The poor woman has nothing but nurses to care for her, she could well do with a little affection. And *she*,' he added, 'she could appreciate what you did for her, and be grateful.'

There was a long silence. M. Darbédat heard Pierre singing in the

adjoining room, though it could hardly be said to be singing, but rather a sort of shrill hurried chant. M. Darbédat raised his eyes to his daughter.

‘So it’s no!’

‘Pierre will stay here,’ she said softly, ‘we get on well together.’

‘So long as you mess about all day . . .’

Eve smiled and shot a strange, mocking, almost cheerful glance at her father. ‘It’s true,’ M. Darbédat thought furiously, ‘that’s all they do together . . . in bed.’

‘You’re as mad as can be!’ he said rising.

Eve smiled sadly and murmured, as though to herself.

‘Not enough!’

‘Not enough? There’s only one thing I can tell you, my child; you frighten me.’ He kissed her hastily and went out. Going downstairs he was thinking: ‘They ought to send along a couple of burly fellows to drag that poor dishclout off by force, and stick him under a shower without even asking his leave.’

It was a fine autumn day, without mystery, and sunlight gilded the faces of those who passed by. M. Darbédat was struck by the simple expression on people’s faces. Some were tanned, others pale, but all reflected the joys, the pre-occupations with which he was familiar.

‘I know just what it is I complain of in her,’ he thought, turning into the Boulevard Saint Germain. ‘I reproach her for living out of touch with humanity. Pierre’s no longer a human being: all the nursing, all the love she bestows on him, she robs in some degree from all those here. One hasn’t the right to hold oneself off from mankind. Be it as it may, we’re all members of society.’

With sympathy, he gazed into the passing faces; serious open expressions filled him with love. There, in these sunny streets, among men, one felt secure, as though in the midst of one huge family.

Hatless, a woman stood in front of a stall, holding a little girl by the hand.

‘What is it?’ the little girl asked, pointing to a wireless set.

‘Don’t touch!’ her mother said. ‘It’s wireless, and it makes music.’

For a while they remained there entranced and silent. M. Darbédat was moved. He nodded towards the little girl and smiled.

II

‘He’s gone!’ The flat door had given a sharp click. Eve was alone in the room. ‘I wish he’d die.’

She clenched her fingers on the back of the arm-chair at the sudden

reminiscence of her father's eyes. M. Darbédat had bent over Pierre with a professional air; he had said 'Was it good, eh?' like someone accustomed to talking to the sick. He had gazed down, and Pierre's face had mirrored itself deep in those big terrible eyes. I hate him when he looks at Pierre, when I think *he sees*.

Eve's hands slid down the back of the chair, and she turned to the window. It dazzled her. Sunlight filled the room, it was everywhere: in circular patches on the carpet: like blinding dust in the air. She had grown unaccustomed to the prying diligent light which ferreted all through the room, and scoured out every corner: which rubbed the furniture and made it glitter like a good housewife. Nevertheless, she went over to the window, and raised the muslin curtain that hung over the panes. At that same moment, M. Darbédat left the building and Eve suddenly saw his broad shoulders. He raised his head, and blinking looked at the sky, then made off like a youngster, with long strides. 'He's overdoing it,' thought Eve, 'he'll be having that pain in his side again.' But now her hatred was almost gone: there was so little left in that head: barely even the trifling preoccupation of appearing young. And yet anger rose in her again as she saw him turn into the Boulevard Saint Germain before disappearing from sight.

'He's thinking of Pierre.' A little of their common life had broken out of the closed room, and was trailing about the streets, in the sunshine, among folk.

'Won't they ever forget we exist?'

The rue du Bac was almost deserted. An old dame, stepping carefully, crossed the road: then three girls laughingly passed. And then men, solid and grave, with portfolios under their arms, talking . . . 'Normal,' thought Eve, astonished to find such hatred in herself. A plump handsome woman ran clumsily up to a rather foppishly dressed man, who hugged her and kissed her mouth. And Eve laughed harshly and dropped the curtain.

Pierre was not singing any more, but the young woman on the third floor had sat herself down to the piano, practising something by Chopin. Eve felt calmer—she took a step towards Pierre's room, then stopped, overcome by a sense of alarm. As always, when she left the room, panic seized her at the thought that she would have to go back to it. And yet she knew perfectly well that that was the only place in which she could live, for she loved the room. With cold curiosity her eyes roved round the room, the shadowless, odourless room, while she waited for her courage to return. 'It's like a dentist's reception room.' The pink silk arm-chairs, the sofa, the stools, all were discreet and sober, benevolent even: good friends of man.

And suddenly Eve began picturing grave men dressed in light suits, like those she had seen from the window, walking into the room, continuing what they were saying. They did not even bother to observe where it was they had come, they strode on firmly into the middle of the room. One, trailing an arm, let it brush the cushions, and the things that stood on the table, but did not even start at the contact. And if some piece of furniture happened to be in the way, staid as they were, these men, far from going round, would calmly move it away. But at last they sat down, still deep in their talk, and without looking round. 'A room for normals,' thought Eve. She gazed at the handle of the shut door and her throat tightened with apprehension. 'I must go back. I never leave him alone so long.'

She had to open that door: then she must wait on the threshold trying to accustom her eyes to the dark, while the room, with all its might, resisted her. She would have to conquer its resistance, and push her way to its heart. Suddenly she had a violent longing to see Pierre. How she would have liked them to make fun of M. Darbédat together. But Pierre didn't need her. Eve had no inkling of how he would welcome her. With a sort of pride she suddenly thought there was nowhere she could go now. 'Normal people still think I'm one of them. But I couldn't even endure being with them for an hour. This is where I feel I must live now, in there, on the other side of this wall. There, I'm not wanted.'

But now, an extraordinary metamorphosis had taken place. The light had aged, turned grey: it had grown denser like water in a flower-vase, which has been left overnight. An ancient melancholy, long forgotten by her, now because of the aged light, seem to hover over all the objects in the room. A melancholy as of a dying autumn afternoon. Hesitantly, almost timidly, she looked round: it was all so far away. There was neither daylight, nor night-time, nor season, nor melancholy in this room. Vaguely, she recalled autumns long long ago, when she had been little. Then suddenly she stiffened, her memories made her afraid:

She heard Pierre's voice.

'Agatha! Where are you?'

'I'm coming,' she cried.

She opened the door and pushed into the room.

The dense odour of incense filled her mouth and nostrils as she widened her eyes and stretched out her hands—the scent and the darkness had for a long time now composed but one element, acrid and flocculent, as simple and familiar as air, fire or water. Circum-

spectly, she moved towards a pale oval which seemed hovering in the mist. It was Pierre's face. Pierre's clothes, he always wore black now since his illness, were merged in the darkness. He had thrown his head back and his eyes were shut. He was handsome to look upon. For a long time Eve gazed at the long curling lashes, then sat down by his side on a low chair. 'He seems in pain,' she thought. Little by little, her eyes grew used to the darkness. First the desk appeared, then the bed, then Pierre's own things, scissors, paste-pot, books; and then his specimens of dried flowers stuck on paper and littering the carpet near his chair.

'Agatha!'

Pierre had opened his eyes, and was looking smilingly at her.

'You know, the fork?' he was saying. 'I did that to frighten the chap. It was *almost* all right.'

Eve's fears vanished, and she laughed lightly.

'It came off splendidly,' she said, 'you had him completely bewildered.'

Pierre smiled.

'Did you see? He kept on messing it about, gripping it. The trouble is they don't know anything about handling things: they grab hold of them.'

'That's true,' said Eve.

Pierre struck his left palm lightly with his right fore-finger.

'That's how they grab at things. They put out their fingers, and when they've grabbed hold of something, they clap down their hands on it and finish it off.'

He talked precipitately, mouthing: he seemed perplexed.

'I wonder what they're after,' he said at last. 'That chap's been here before. What have they sent him for? If they want to know what I'm doing, they've only to look on the screen: they needn't even leave their houses. They make mistakes. They've got the power, but they make mistakes. I never make any myself, that's my trump card.'

'Hoff ka,' he said, 'hoff ka.' He waved his slender hands in front of his eyes. 'What a whore! Hoff ka, paff ka, suff ka. Do you want any more?'

'Is it the bell?' asked Eve.

'Yes, it's gone,' he went on sternly. 'That chap, he's an underling. You know him, you went into the sitting-room with him.'

Eve made no reply.

'What did he want?' said Pierre. 'He must have told you.'

For a moment she hesitated, then answered brutally.

'He wanted to have you shut up!'

When you told Pierre the truth gently, he got suspicious. One had to bludgeon him: then he got bothered and his suspicions were paralysed. Eve preferred to deal brutally with him rather than lie to him: when she lied and he seemed to believe her, she could not help feeling slightly superior, and that made her hate herself.

‘Shut me up,’ Pierre repeated sarcastically. ‘They’re raving! What difference could walls make to me. Perhaps they imagine that that would stop me. I sometimes wonder whether there aren’t two gangs of them. The real one, the negro’s. And then that gang of marplots who want to stick their noses into everything, and do nothing but blunder.’

He began tapping with his hand on his arm-rests, and looked at her with an air of delight.

‘Walls can be got through. What answer did you make?’ he asked, turning towards Eve curiously.

‘That I shouldn’t allow it.’

He shrugged his shoulders.

‘You shouldn’t have said that. You made a mistake too—unless you did it on purpose. You should have let them put their cards on the table.’

He fell silent. Eve sadly drooped her head. ‘They grab them!’ How scornfully he had said that—and how true it was. ‘Do I grab things too? In spite of the care I take, I believe nearly everything I do irritates him. But he doesn’t say anything.’ Suddenly she felt miserable, as when, at fourteen, Mme Darbédat, slim and active, would say to her: ‘Anyone would think you didn’t know what to do with your hands.’ She dared not move, and just at that moment she felt an irresistible desire to change her position. As gently as possible she drew her feet in under her chair, barely brushing the carpet. She looked at the lamp on the table—the lamp whose base Pierre had painted black, and the chessmen. He had left only the black pawns on the chess-board. At times he would rise, go to the table, and take the pawns one by one in his hands. He talked to them, called them Robots, and in his fingers they seemed to begin to have a secret life of their own. When he had set them down again, Eve would go up and touch them too. (She felt she was being rather ridiculous.) But they had turned into mere dead bits of wood again, though there was something vague and uncapturable about them still, something like a secret awareness. ‘They’re his things,’ she thought, ‘there’s nothing of mine any more in the room.’ Once she had had some pieces of furniture, the mirror, and the little marquetry dressing-table that had once been her grandmother’s, and which Pierre would jokingly call ‘Your

dressing-table.' But Pierre had drawn them along after him, and only to Pierre would things show their real faces now. Eve might gaze at them for hours, but with an unrelenting obstinacy they remained determined to deceive her, and reveal only the simulacrum of themselves, as though she were Dr. Franchot or M. Darbédat. 'And yet,' she told herself anguishedly, 'I no longer see them exactly as Father does. It isn't possible that I see them exactly like him.'

She moved her knees slightly, for there were pins and needles in her legs. Her body was tense and rigid: it hurt: she felt it was too much alive, altogether too obvious. 'I should like to be invisible and be here: see him without him seeing me: he doesn't need me. I'm one too many in this room.' She turned her head sharply, and looked at the wall over Pierre's head. On the wall threats had been written. Eve knew it, though she was unable to read them. She often looked at the big red flowers on the wall, until they started to dance in front of her. The roses flared in the darkness. Generally, the threat was written close to the ceiling, a bit to the left over the bed: but sometimes it moved. 'I must get up. I can't . . . I can't stay sitting like this much longer.' On the wall there were also circles of white that looked like slices of onion. The discs began to revolve, and Eve's hands started to tremble. 'There are times when I feel I'm going mad. But no,' she thought bitterly, 'I can't go mad. I'm upset, that's all there is to it.'

Suddenly she felt Pierre's hand on her arm.

'Agatha,' Pierre said tenderly.

He smiled at her, but held her hand with his finger-tips, in a sort of repulsion, as though holding a crab and staying out of reach of its claws.

'Agatha,' he said, 'how I wish I had faith in you.'

Eve's eyes closed, and her breast heaved. 'I mustn't answer, else he won't trust me, or tell me anything.'

Pierre had released her hand.

'I love you, Agatha,' he said. 'But I can't understand you. Why do you stay in the room all the time?'

Eve made no reply.

'Tell me why.'

'You know that I love you!' she answered abruptly.

'I don't believe it,' said Pierre. 'Why should you love me? You should hate me. I'm haunted.' He smiled, but suddenly became serious.

'There's a wall between you and me. I see you. I talk to you, but you're on the other side. What prevents us loving each other. I think it used to be easier once: in Hamburg.'

'Yes,' said Eve sadly. Always Hamburg. Not once did he ever talk of their real past. Neither Eve nor he had ever been in Hamburg.

'We used to walk by the canals. There was a lighter, don't you remember? The lighter was black: there was a dog on the deck.'

He was inventing momentarily . . . with a sly expression on his face.

'I was holding your hand: your skin was different. I believed everything you told me. Shut up!' he shouted.

He listened for a moment.

'They're coming,' he said drearily.

Eve started.

'They're coming! And I was thinking they'd never come any more.'

For three days now Pierre had been more tranquil: the statues had kept away. Pierre had a horrible fear of the statues, though he would never admit to it. They did not make her afraid, but when they began to fly humming through the room, she was afraid of Pierre.

'Fetch me the Ziuthre,' said Pierre.

Eve rose and got him his Ziuthre. It was contrived of bits of cardboard stuck together by Pierre: he had made it to exorcise the statues. The Ziuthre looked like a spider. On one of the pieces of card Pierre had written 'Power over ambushes,' and on another 'Black.' On a third he had drawn a laughing face, with wrinkled eyelids: that was Voltaire. Pierre took hold of the Ziuthre by one of its legs, and looked at it darkly.

'It's no use to me any more,' he said.

'Why?'

'They've reversed it!'

'You'll make another for yourself.'

He looked at her steadily.

'You'd like me to,' he hissed.

Eve felt angry with him. 'Every time they come, he has warning. How does he manage it? He's never once wrong.'

The Ziuthre dangled woefully from Pierre's fingers. 'He's always got some excellent excuse why he won't use it. Sunday, when they came, he pretended it was mislaid, though I could see it perfectly, well behind the inkpot, and he couldn't. I wonder if he doesn't attract them himself. You never know whether he's being honest or not.' At times Eve had the impression that in spite of himself, unhealthy ideas and visions swarmed in on him. But at others, Pierre looked so sly, she could have sworn he was inventing it all. He's in pain? But *how much* does he believe in the statues and negro? As for the

statues, I know positively that he doesn't see, but only hears them. When they pass by, he turns his head away: and yet he says he does see them and even describes them. Dr. Franchot's rubicund face rose in front of her: 'But, dear lady, all madmen are liars. You're wasting your time if you try to distinguish what is it they really feel, from what they pretend they feel.' She started: 'What's Franchot got to do with all this? I'm not going to start thinking about him.'

Pierre had got up in order to throw the Ziuthre into the waste-paper basket.

'It's like you that I want to think,' she murmured. He was walking with tiny steps, tip-toe, his elbows pressed to his sides, to be as compact as possible. He returned, sat down, and looked blankly at Eve.

'We shall have to hang black round the room,' he said. 'There's not enough black in this room.'

He sat slumped in his chair, and Eve gazed sadly at the miserly body, always so ready to draw itself in, to curl itself up: the arms, the legs, the head like retractile organs. Six o'clock struck: the piano was silent. Eve sighed: the statues would not come at once, they would have to wait for them.

'Shall I put on the light?'

She would rather not wait in the dark for them.

'Do as you like,' said Pierre.

Eve switched the small desk lamp on, and a red mist invaded the room. Pierre also sat waiting.

He did not speak though his lips moved: they made two dark spots in the red mist. Eve loved these lips of Pierre's. Once they had been voluptuous and moved her deeply: but they had lost their voluptuousness now. They moved apart, quivering gently, and came together again, crushing against each other with untiring repetition. They seemed the only things that lived in that shut off visage; they made her think of two timorous little beasts. Pierre could mumble away like this for hours, without a sound issuing from him. At times, she was all but hypnotized by the repetition of that tiny implacable motion. 'I love his mouth.' But now he never kissed her, physical contact revolted him. At night hands touched him, male hands, hard and horny, pinched all his body: women's hands with long nails caressed him foully. Often he got into bed in his clothes, but the hands slid under his clothes and plucked at his shirt. Once he heard laughter, and once swollen lips pressed on his own. It was from that night he had stopped kissing Eve.

'Agatha,' said Pierre, 'don't look at my mouth.'

Eve lowered her eyes.

'I know as well as you, that one can learn to read from a man's lips,' he continued aggressively.

His hand trembled on the arm-rest. The forefinger went rigid, and tapped thrice on the thumb, while the remaining fingers clenched themselves: it was an exorcism. 'It's beginning,' she thought. She had a longing to take Pierre in her arms.

Pierre began talking aloud, as though in a drawing-room. 'Do you remember San Pauli?'

She did not reply. Perhaps it was a trap.

'That's where I got to know you,' he said complacently. 'I got you away from a Danish sailor. We came almost to blows, but I bought the drinks, and he let us go. It was all a game.'

'He's lying: he doesn't believe a word of it all. He knows my name's not Agatha. I hate him when he's lying.' But she saw his glazed eyes and her anger melted. 'He's not lying,' she thought, 'he just can't stand any more. He feels them coming: he's talking so he shan't hear.' Pierre was clutching the arms of his chair. His face had gone livid: he was smiling.

'Such meetings are often strange,' he was saying, 'but I personally don't believe in hazard. I don't ask who sent you, I know you won't tell. In any case you were clever enough to bespatter me.'

He was talking with difficulty, in a shrill precipitate voice. There were words he could not pronounce, which came out of his mouth like some flabby shapeless substance.

'You dragged me off, right in the middle of the fair, among the black motor-car roundabouts, but past the motors there was a host of scarlet eyes which gleamed when my back was turned. I believe you were signalling to them, though you had your arm in mine, but I didn't notice. I was too engrossed in the grand ceremonies of the Coronation.'

He looked straight in front of him with wide open eyes. He passed a hand over his brow, very swiftly, with a brief gesture, talking incessantly the while: he did not want to stop.

'It was the Coronation of the Republic,' he said in a strident voice, 'a most impressive spectacle of its kind on account of the animals of every species sent by the Colonies for the ceremony. You were frightened of getting lost among the monkeys. I said among the monkeys,' he reiterated with an arrogant air, looking round. 'I could say among the negroes. The foetuses that glide under the tables and think they're unseen, are caught out on the spot and nailed by My Eye. The watchword is "Silence,"' he shouted, 'Silence: Everyone to their place, Attention! for the statues are coming!'

'That's the watchword, tralala,' he yelled, putting his hands like a trumpet in front of his mouth. 'Tralala . . . tralala!'

He fell silent and she knew that the statues had entered the room. He sat tensely, pallid and full of scorn. Eve stiffened also, and both waited silent. Someone walked down the passage: it was Marie, the 'daily,' who had probably just come. Eve thought 'I must give her some money for the gas.' And then the statues began flying around, passing between her and Pierre.

A guttural sound broke from Pierre's breast, and he buried himself in his chair, pulling his legs up. His head was turned away, and from time to time he sniggered, but beads of sweat started out on his brow. Eve could not endure the sight of his pallid cheeks, or the tremulous grimace that distorted his mouth: she shut her eyes. Gold threads began to dance on the red ground of her lids, she felt old and weighed down. Near by, Pierre was panting hard. 'They're flying, they're humming, they're bending over him now.' She felt a tickling sensation, a pressure on her shoulder and right thigh. And instinctively her body bent left, as though to avoid some unpleasant contact, as though to make way for some object, heavy and clumsy. Suddenly the floor-boards creaked, and a mad desire came over her to open her eyes and look to the right, and saw through the air with her hands. But she did nothing. She kept her eyes closed, and a harsh delight sent a shudder through her. 'I'm *also afraid*,' she thought. Everything in her seemed to be huddled for refuge in her right side. She bent towards Pierre without opening her eyes. The slightest effort would be sufficient, and for the first time she would enter that tragic world of his. 'I'm afraid of the statues,' she thought. It was a sudden blind affirmation, an incantation: with all her might she wanted to believe they were there. And she tried to make a new sense, a touching, of that anguish which paralysed her right side. In her arm, in her thigh and shoulder, she felt them passing.

The statues flew low and gently: they hummed. Eve knew they looked baleful, and that lashes grew out of the stone round their eyes: but she found it difficult to picture them. She knew too that they were not entirely alive, but that patches of flesh, warm scales, mottled their great bodies: that the stone peeled from their finger tips, and that the palms of their hands itched. Eve could not *see* all this: she thought simply that enormous women slid up against her, solemn and grotesque, with a human expression, and the dense obstinacy of stone. 'They're leaning over Pierre—' Eve made such a violent effort over herself, that her hands began trembling—'they're bending over me . . .' A fearful cry froze her suddenly. 'They've touched

him.' She opened her eyes. Pierre had his head in his hands, he was panting. Eve felt worn out. 'A game,' she thought with remorse: 'it was only a game, not for a moment did I really believe in it. And yet during that time, he was going through agony.'

Pierre relaxed, breathing stertorously. But his pupils remained oddly dilated. He was sweating.

'You saw them?' he asked.

'I can't see them.'

'So much the better for you, they'd make you afraid. I,' he said, 'I've got used to them.'

Eve's hands went on trembling, the blood had rushed to her head. Pierre took a cigarette from his pocket and put it to his lips. But he did not light it.

'It doesn't matter to me whether I see them or not,' he said, 'but I won't have them touch me. I'm afraid they might give me pimples.'

He thought for a moment, and asked:

'Did you hear them?'

'Yes,' said Eve, 'like an aeroplane engine' (Pierre had said so himself the preceding Sunday).

Pierre smiled condescendingly.

'That's exaggerating!' he said. But he remained pallid. He looked at Eve's hands. 'Your hands are trembling. My poor Agatha, it must have upset you, but there's no need to be worried, they won't come again till to-morrow.'

Eve could not reply: her teeth were chattering and she was afraid Pierre might notice it. He looked at her steadily.

'You're mighty lovely,' he said, nodding. 'A pity, truly a pity.' He put his hand out swiftly, brushing her ear.

'My lovely demon! You bother me a bit: you're too lovely: it distracts my mind. If it wasn't for that recapitulation . . .'

He stopped and looked at Eve in surprise.

'That wasn't the word. It came . . . it came . . .' he said smiling vaguely. 'The other was on the tip of my tongue, and then that one came and took its place. I've forgotten what I was going to say to you . . .'

He thought for a moment and then shook his head.

'Well,' he said, 'I'm going to sleep now,' and added, in a babyish voice. 'You know, Agatha, I'm tired. I can't collect my thoughts any more.'

He threw his cigarette away and looked anxiously at the carpet. Eve slid a pillow under his head.

‘You can sleep too,’ he said, shutting his eyes: ‘They won’t come back now.’

‘*Recapitulation.*’ Pierre slept, a faint, frank smile on his face: his head hung limp, almost as though his cheek was trying to stroke his shoulder. Eve did not feel sleepy: she was thinking. ‘*Recapitulation.*’ Pierre had suddenly looked stupid, and the long whitish word had slipped out of his mouth. Pierre had looked in front of him with astonishment, as though he saw, but did not recognize the word: his lips had been open, flabby: something seemed to have broken in him. He had stammered. It was the first time that had happened to him. He had realized it though. He had said he couldn’t collect his thoughts. Just then, he uttered a slight voluptuous moan, and his hand moved slightly. She looked at him with a hard look. ‘How will he wake?’ It tormented her. The moment Pierre slept she had to think of it, she couldn’t prevent herself. She was afraid he might wake with eyes clouded, his talking incoherent. ‘I’m stupid,’ she thought, ‘that’s not for a year yet, Franchot said so.’ But the feeling of anxiety would not leave her: a year, a winter, a summer, the start of another autumn. One day these features would lose their outline, he would let his jaw drop and peer through weeping half-shut eyes. Eve bent over Pierre’s hand with a touch of her lips. ‘I shall kill you first.’

SPAIN, WAR AND DEATH



E. FERNANDEZ

THE SAPPERS

Translated from the Spanish by Helen Simpson

Durmiente los días e las noches trasnochando.

Cantares del Mio Cid.

THE night was very dark. No moon. A thick mist soaked hands and faces. The sapper company went in file, keeping close, not to lose contact. The road, newly opened to traffic, was a muddy waste. Nothing to be seen. From time to time our advance was held up. From one end of the file to the other the only sound was a single word, a hundred times repeated: Halt, halt, halt. 'What's wrong, what's up?' Nothing. Nothing was wrong except that, lacking use of eyes, we had wandered from the narrow track. Right and left they went off, two sappers, or a lieutenant, or a commissar, to explore the terrain. Then on again, slowly, up the hill's uneasy slope. The nearness of the men to each other meant frequent collisions and the thin clink of equipment, sounds by no means new to the sentries, who neither halted us nor asked the password, but answered their own question: 'Sappers? Straight ahead.'

Ahead we went, up the misted boggy hill.

When we started work the night was so thick that we could not see the marks of our picks in the whitened earth, and had to feel with our hands among clots of turned-up mould for the wavering zig-zag line of the trench. Criss-cross against the sky the fire from enemy machine-guns showed red or green, and died. The work went forward silently, men sinking into the earth; heavy frozen earth, tenaciously resisting shovels and picks. We needed all our energy, hence the silence. From time to time bullets whipped over our heads trailing an instant's light; this light too was coloured; green or red.

Towards dawn the moon came out, shining whole and full like a great button stuck in the sky. As the mist grew less a fine frost whitened the folds of the sappers' capes. There were some queer reflections, tricks of moonlight on sodden men, wet shining fields.

We had been warned that there might be an attempted attack; the trenches had to be left clear for infantry. Soldiers came creeping up to the firing pits we had made for them, filed along the communication

trench to the parapet, getting the machine-guns on to their emplacements. Pits, trenches, emplacements, all were our work, pick and shovel work, gravedigger's work. (One metre seventy, head high. Field of fire? Good. Cross-fire? O.K. That's all. The trench is narrow, chests and shoulders touch its walls as the soldiers move. Short zig-zags, so that when the daylight comes the airmen may not have too easy a job with their machine-guns and bombs to punish men crouching there and watching, hour after hour.)

The attack remained a rumour. Once again the company of sappers, looking like an immense snake as it followed the abrupt turns of the road, made for camp.

We were in Hell. This statement needs amplifying. Our camp was at the bottom of the ravine which splits the Devil's Mountain, and so, naturally, we called it Hell. On either side of the valley rose almost perpendicular walls of clay. The snow lay thick, effacing all landmarks. Nothing grew there except gorse and a kind of wild rosemary. There were partridges about, stricken motionless now with the cold. Many of the sappers had done well with these partridges; you could catch them with your hands. Along the ravine twinkled hundreds of little fires, the soldiers' poor attempt, only half successful, to cheat the weather. Hands and faces reddened by flames, stiff snowy shoulders. Even Hell could not keep out the snow. We had to thaw the shrubs before they would burn. Rills of water trickled incessantly upon the clay walls, ran together, and came splashing down into the valley.

Holding the position were Marines; Marine Infantry, 1,400 metres above sea-level. Said one of these, standing over a fire:

'Eskimos live in houses made of ice, they keep warm all right.'

'They wear fur, and anyway they're used to it.'

A sapper contributed something further to the general knowledge of Eskimos.

'They say the nights up at the North Pole are six months long.'

'God help the poor North Pole sappers.'

The firelight shone upon their large laughter.

But I could hear, somewhere, the chorus of a song, a Galician popular tune sung by half a dozen voices:

'Polo rio abaixo vai
unha troita de pe—'

I made through the snow towards this singing. The men, sappers and marines, got up when I showed myself, but all I wanted was to sing with them. Only one was a Galician; all were sailors. The Galician

and I got on well. His name was Juan, and he came from Palmeira. When the fascists arrived he said to his wife: 'You'll be hearing from me, over on the other side.' He had a notion that he would like to fight fascists. Somehow he had got his wish, and that was how we came all to be singing together by the light of the fire.

Soon Juan was off. He smelled something; a group by a fire near ours caught his attention.

'What have they got there?'

One of the group was holding his shovel over the flames. The others were stoking, feeding the flames with tufts of rosemary which gave out a strong scented smoke.

'They can't get away with that.'

And off he went towards the group. False alarm; they were only melting snow on the shovel. They wanted a drink.

A caravan of lorries shifted the sappers away from the line. In these lorries we huddled together. The wind came at us, strong as a great wave. One of the men, gesturing towards the valley, shouted: 'Kitchens, kitchens!' There were no kitchens. He was remembering December, when we had been in camp there; where his finger pointed the field-kitchens once had stood. Now there was only the bare deep valley flooded with sunlight; between a broad winding road and the river two thin parallel lines of poplars; farms and a few birds the only signs of life. The river turned towards a defile; two railway tracks which had progressed side by side for some kilometres parted company, going in opposite directions to serve the great plain held in by mountains. April. Flocks of goats on the rocky heights, so far off as hardly to be distinguished from rocks; not moving, and coloured the same.

The caravan halted in a village. We had hardly stopped before a soldier shouted at me, and I remembered him, one of the men who sang the Galician song in the snow. 'How are the others? Juan, where's he?' No time, the caravan was on the move again. Petrol, sunshine, engines vibrating. 'Juan? Not here. Left him behind. Dead.' The soldier shouted each phrase louder than the last, shouted after me as we moved on. He waved his arms; he dwindled; the distance swallowed him up.

After that I sat with my eyes shut and lips close together, thinking of Juan's wife in Palmeira, and what he said to her before he went away.

EWART MILNE

SIERRAN VIGIL

WHERE the lazy wall is down
where the lemon leaf is poisoned
where the road is holed: where gloom of
cloud and sky is blessing: we

Speaking no good word for war
for heroics, for the kingly dust,
exalting not the self-evident murder,
turn: not assuming hope: turn, offering hands.

Where blue is war zone's leading light
where blue lights plead for morning: where
doorways wince the darkness out:
we there, ill-starred too, offer hands.

Guitarists who with Yi Yi Yi
haunted melody with reflection
heed now the rifles' acid action
and find through fingering a new notation.

The boy with the goats takes over, takes power.
The boy with the goats, green Gabriel still,
dyes the terraced hillsides with his Never . . .
and in his river.

Here where the lazy wall is down
here where the lemon leaf is poisoned
where the road is holed, is trustless,
we, remembering love, kill cruelly. . . .

Kill cruelty. Hi and you nestle in gunfire, poet!
Hi and you mow down forests briefly!
Hi and you gain the cunning touch
that low on Andalusian evenings strikes your match.

For this is the act, the chorus argument.
This is the work we have said is to do.
This is the thing now trust and fear both fail
we have resorted to:

Though no man here is hero, and we
line up defending the unheroic unalterably!
Who taught us war? This time
those who did not begin will finish it. . . .

For chico's sake, for chica's pride. . . .

And where the lazy wall is down
where the lemon leaf is poisoned
where the road is holed, is trustless,
here shall we grow the olive, and the orange blithely.

T. C. WORSLEY

MALAGA HAS FALLEN

THE road out of Almeria turned and twisted, following the indented coast. It was cut out from the dark grey rock, which fell away steeply down to the sea on one hand, and rose steeply up on the other; pitched between the rising hills and the shore, it was very beautiful, but the going was slow, with its sharp blind turns and narrow bridges.

We had only gone about ten miles when we came on a few straggling parties of peasants, each grouped round a donkey or a mule, burdened not only with a mother or child, but with household possessions, pots, blankets, mattresses, piled high on the beasts' backs.

'Refugees,' Dr. Rathbone said. 'I wonder where they're coming from?'

They looked very tired; the animals were walking with listless, shuffling steps, and the people the same. All big families, the father and mother each carried a small child, while the eight or nine-year-olds walked behind, clinging, many of them, to the tails of the animals, to help them along.

For the next three or four miles we met these parties regularly at intervals of a hundred yards. Rathbone was puzzled:

'Don't remember seeing so many refugees. I guess there's more than we ever saw outside Madrid, eh, Hesketh? Where have they come from? Malaga, I reckon . . . and they must have started a long while back. . . . Say, look at this Bethlehem group; take a picture of 'em, Hesketh.'

There came by a girl-mother, with a baby at her breast, perched on a donkey, which a middle-aged peasant, tall, thin, brown, wearing a sombrero, was leading by a string. We stopped a moment for Hesketh to take a photograph.

Round every corner they came, seeming to get a little thicker, the distances between each group receding: the top-heavy donkeys and mules emitting an occasional pathetic bellow, the children plodding behind mostly barefooted, the women and men with typical peasant faces, creased and prematurely old; unsmiling and uncomplaining they seemed to be going through an unending routine with fixed automatic movements.

The intervals between them continued to decrease: until down one

side of the road there was a continual thin line, a long colourless procession, like a grey rope threading the twisting road: until they became a part, simply, of the road itself, merging into the dust and the dark grey rock.

The road took a turn away from the sea and cut for twenty miles across a plain. As we breasted the hill which led on to it, we found the thin line almost perceptibly swelling, so that it was taking up now a quarter, now a half, now three-quarters of the road, the straggling line of donkeys, women, peasants, spread out over it, so that there was barely room for the lorry to squeeze slowly past. Inside we had fallen quite silent.

As we reached the top of the hill, and the plain spread out in front, the road was visible for some ten or fifteen miles. At least, not the road, but the people on it; a long, winding procession, blacking out the road as far as one could see, winding away over the horizon; and beside the dark, broad main stream, rivulets and tributaries, striking out individual paths across the heath and the foothills.

We stopped the lorry in sheer amazement. The long winding stream of people, struggling and shifting, black against the green heath, was like some vast Old Testament exodus, spread out before us: the illusion heightened by the donkeys and the grey-white single-piece cloak folded like a hood round the heads of many of the women and children; others in black, with long thick shawls draped over head and shoulders: all swarthy, dark-skinned: all with differentiations of dress and colour almost obliterated by the dirt and dust which enveloped them.

As the lorry stood there, the stream seethed round it, poured round and on, as if it were a tree stump, solid in the slow, ceaseless movement of a sluggish stream.

'Christ!' Rathbone said, 'look at 'em, look at 'em. As far as you can see. There's ten thousand of them; yeh, a good ten thousand. I hope they're expecting them in Almeria . . . there didn't seem to be much for them there. . . . Did you ever see anything like it? God, they're like ants, like an army of ants! Come on, boys, we must get on. We must see what's in back of 'em.'

It was difficult going; we had to push our way through, nosing by, and sounding the horn continuously. And then we began to notice among the refugees some militiamen, with stubbled beards, looking dead to the world.

'Bloody anarchists, I reckon,' Hesketh muttered. 'What are they going this way for?'

'Deserters I guess,' Rathbone said.

Soon the proportion of militiamen increased: a troop of cavalry

came by, with a helpless defeated air, covered with mud and sweat, the horses dragging; often they carried a double load, a child or a girl up beside the rider, while some men were leading their mounts, having given up their place to old women or children, who sat astride the cavalry horses slumped down on the saddles.

More cavalry and then more: and behind them the militia, in uniforms none of which matched, all torn, ragged, dirty. Those who were old enough had stubbled beards, but most were too young; an army of boys, routed and leaderless, straggling desperately past with their rifles, many of them carrying their boots tied round their necks. No single person ever seemed to speak to any other; no smile, no touch of emotional colour, relieved the dark despair of the procession.

'It's a rout,' Rathbone whispered. 'It's not a defeat, it's a bloody rout: Christ, what are they doing? There's a whole army here. Why aren't they covering the retreat? Christ, look, there are thousands of them, thousands, and they haven't been fighting. You can see they haven't been fighting.'

'They look pretty done,' I said.

'Yes, they're done all right, but not with fighting, with running away; that's what's done 'em. We haven't seen a single officer; the first one we see we'll stop and ask. Probably the buggers got away a long time since in fast cars.'

As the soldiers began to thin, and the peasants to predominate again—but the size of the unceasing stream never diminished—we stopped and tried to find out what was happening. No one seemed to know for certain. The fascists were sweeping up the road; no one knew where. They were coming somewhere behind; no one knew how close. The militia? They had been ordered to fall back on Almeria; they were going to make a stand there.

Inside the lorry they had been completely externalized; we had viewed the procession as you view a film unrolling itself in front of you, the reality of which by focusing your consciousness on the seat you occupy, on yourself, and your immediate surroundings, you could somehow diminish; so that the stream of people had been outside, was performing with the unreal realism of actors. But the moment we stepped out from the security of the interior and mixed with the people, we found ourselves engulfed in the atmosphere of that road; an atmosphere through which panic and rumour ran like a flame which burned out of the people every thought but one: 'The Fascists Are Behind, push on, push on.' There was little confusion or wildness, none of the stampeding violence of other panics; everyone was too exhausted. But panic was there in their refusal to explain, to talk, to

smile, to stop, to do anything but move on mechanically and ceaselessly until they should reach the safety and protection of—whatever lay in front. 'Scared' they were, as Rathbone said, desperate with fright, but their desperation expressed itself only in the urge to get on, without even a rest, until they were safe.

As we stood in the crowd, asking questions of the moving mass, who wouldn't stop to answer them, we were caught in the emotional tension of the atmosphere, its unreasoning ignorance of the situation, its listening only to the rumours, which came breathing up from behind, blowing over them like a dry gust of wind; and serving only to lock their silence, and to carry their feet doggedly on.

'I can't see any point in going on,' Hesketh said, 'until we find out what's happening; let's think it out. I only wish we'd brought that rifle; we haven't even got guns, and we might run into the fascists round any corner.'

'How *can* we find out? No one knows anything. There's only one way to find out,' Rathbone replied, 'to go on.'

I was between the two; I was as frightened as Hesketh, and at the same time, unnaturally excited as my imagination ran ahead to picture a situation where, round a corner, we saw the fascists in the distance, and hastily backed, turned, and fled, with bullets whistling past; and I began estimating the size of the lorry, and the width of the road, and calculated that it was far too big and clumsy a vehicle for that kind of manœuvring.

We stood wavering in a little group round the lorry, watching the set faces of the despairing procession. Ordinarily the lorry, with its brightly painted sides, aroused excited interest, but now no one troubled to look at it, or at us; eyes were straining blankly ahead, or fixed on the ground, as they trod out their set, mechanical rhythm; a few disjointed shouts or cries alone contesting with the noise of the shuffling feet and hooves.

Suddenly Rathbone made a decisive gesture; he pulled me round by the shoulders, and pointed up at the painting on the lorry with a dramatic finger, and read out the script with an emotional quiver in his voice, like a 'ham' actor doing his big moment.

'AMERICAN BLOOD TRANSFUSION UNIT—FOR SERVICE TO THE FRONTS. See that boys. FOR SERVICE TO THE FRONT. To the front we go.' And with a swagger and a smile he climbed into the driving seat and, jerking his head at us to follow, started up the engine. We climbed in beside him.

Now we were winding back by the sea again; the refugees still filled

the road and the further we got the worse was their condition. A few of them were wearing rubber shoes, but most feet were bound round with rags, many were bare, nearly all were bleeding. Donkeys became scarcer and scarcer.

We passed through a little village, which was cleaned out, as bare and stark as a picked skeleton. You could imagine the crowd descending on the village and sweeping up the inhabitants, who would catch the panic, and picking up everything they valued, tie it to their donkeys and make off. The walls of the empty houses still stood, but nothing more; they were empty and deserted except for a few stragglers who sat resting on the doorsteps. The emptiness, and the streets strewn with rubbish, the squatters on the doorsteps, and the bedraggled group round the pump, heightened the sense of confusion and misery to a terrifying degree.

From the comparative comfort of the interior of the lorry, the procession had ceased to be marvellous—a spectacle. It had become pitiful, tragic. There were seventy miles of people, desperate with hunger and exhaustion, and still the stream showed no sign of diminishing. 'Not ten thousand: thirty thousand, forty thousand,' Rathbone muttered. 'Poor devils, our imagination can't reach their suffering.'

A little way past the village coming round a corner we thought for a moment that we had reached the end. In front the road stood, for a few hundred yards, bare and white. To see a road bare and white was something so strange that we automatically slowed down.

'Stop, Rath,' Hesketh suddenly shouted. 'Quick, 'planes!' We drew up and jumped out, and high in the far distance behind were two bombers, whose faint hum was only just audible. The sides of the road, the rocks, and the shore were dotted with the refugees, pressed down on their faces, burrowing into holes. Children lay flat, with one frightened eye turned up towards the sky, with their hands pressed tight over their ears, or folded backwards to protect their vulnerable necks. Huddled groups crouched everywhere; mothers already on the brink of exhaustion, held down their children, pushing them down into every cranny and hollow, flattening themselves into the hard earth, while the 'planes droned nearer, and then roared overhead and swept past.

And then, slowly, as the sound of the 'planes died away, fearfully and distrustfully, as if this might be a trap, in solitary twos and threes, they emerged, rising from the ground as if from a grave, and straggled back on to the road.

'These poor bastards have been bombed before,' Rathbone said as we got in again. 'They know only too well what to do.'

The sun was setting over the sea in a flaunting blaze of rich, deep rose, which suffused the whole scene. But no one noticed it; it added no comfort to the road. We were passing now between fields of sugar-cane; the road was strewn with the trampled leaves; desperately, the people waved and shouted to us to go back; groups of militiamen, gathered round buses which had run out of petrol, formed barriers across the road to intercept us. 'Al Frente, Al Frente,' Rathbone shouted, and, as he drove at them, they melted.

It was dark the moment after sunset; and now our lights, piercing the darkness, blinded the stream flowing against us, and a wild chant, 'Lights, lights, put out your lights' rose up; and the cries continued even when, turning out the headlights, we travelled with only the pin-points of side-lamps; even they might attract the bombers.

The milestones marked only twenty, and Hesketh, consulting the map, discovered that not Malaga, as we thought, but Motril was zero. 'We'll make Zero anyhow,' Rathbone said, gripping his lips together. But the darkness deepened and the confusion increased; the mass seemed to swell and gather, so that we were hardly moving at all. For an hour we struggled on reducing the mileage only to twelve. Rathbone pulled up.

'It's no good, boys. We can't get on in this. I guess we'll fill the truck with kids. I've been counting; there must be some twenty thousand kids under ten on this road. Kids only.'

With the greatest difficulty in the darkness, he turned the lorry on the narrow road and opened the back. Instantly we were the centre of a mob of raving, shouting people, entreating and begging, at this sudden miraculous apparition. The scene was fantastic, of the shouting faces of the women holding up naked babies above their heads, pleading, crying and sobbing, with gratitude or disappointment, and Rathbone coolly in the middle of them, soothing, calming, rejecting, and selecting. But the reeling crowd, fighting like animals, and the darkness, were too much for him; the inside was crammed with the women and children nearest him and the back was shut up.

'Now, Hesketh, I want you to take this load back to Almeria. Take 'em to the hospital. We'll start walking back, Tom and I. If you can get back here, good. But I guess it won't be possible. I reckon Almeria's going to be the most confused town in the whole of the world, for the next few days. Don't worry about us; we'll make it somehow.'

Rathbone and I each took a mackintosh, and the loaded lorry slowly nosed off, pushing its way through the still shouting crowd.

We stood watching the lorry disappearing, while the crowd broke up and resumed its march. 'Got a cigarette, Tom?' Rathbone asked. I hadn't; neither had Rathbone.

'So what now? I'll tell you what I'd like. I'd like to push on to Motril. See what's happening down there. What do you say?'

I was tired of these dramatics. For the last ten miles I had thought that our behaviour, driving through the people, pushing them out of the way to this side and that, blinding them with our headlights and dramatically shouting 'To the front, to the front,' while it stimulated a certain vein of vanity—we alone dashing towards the enemy while sixty thousand people fled—was pointless, extravagant play-acting.

Besides, I was frightened; the fascists must be certainly in Motril; I couldn't see the point of walking deliberately into them. But in face of Rathbone's fearlessness I hardly liked to say so; instead I said, 'Well, I don't know if you're a good walker, Rath; we're more than eighty miles from Almeria, and it looks as if we shall have to walk the whole way. That's going to take us about three days; and it seems a pity to put ourselves any farther off.'

'I guess you're right,' Rathbone agreed, and turned back a little regretfully from the direction of Motril. 'Vamoos. But I wish we had a cigarette.'

We joined the procession; it was half-past ten and too dark to see any of the others. There were sounds only, a ceaseless shuffling of feet, dragging along the road, feet softly shod; an occasional cry from a driver to his donkey; the plaintive whine of tired children; and from the women a continuous moan of sorrow, a bitter low sound, 'Pheu, Aiee,' which took me suddenly back to my school days. 'Aiee, Aiee,' it was the very sound that stood for grief in Greek choruses. Now it suddenly became alive. It rose continually throughout the night, from the lips of the women as they struggled on, 'Pheu, Pheu. Aiee, Aiee.' Cutting across it were shouted names, 'Antonio, Madre, Antonio.' In the confusion of the darkness a lagging child would be lost; it might easily have slipped down in exhaustion, and not been missed for the moment. Now the mother came fearfully along, her frightened cry joining the other night sounds as she stumbled back.

The night was fine and clear, but sharply cold. By the side of the road fires of dried palms were being lighted, and family groups gathered round them, the children falling instantly into exhausted sleep, the elders mumbling quietly to each other and stretching out gnarled hands to the flames. They all kept one eye on the road behind them. The flames blazing up here and there along the road threw the bowed figures round them into silhouette.

After an hour's walking Rathbone suggested, 'Let's get some sleep, Tom. I'm done.' We went off the road and lay down behind a row of palms. Rathbone seemed to sleep, but I couldn't; the flickering pictures of the seemingly endless procession and the huddled groups at the roadside danced on one's strained nerves. And the cold crept in and round. I walked restlessly up and down to keep warm, and to avoid my thoughts. And soon the Doctor gave up too, and we set off again.

Within half an hour we came across the low houses of a village. 'We'll find something here,' Rathbone said hopefully. Personally I didn't want to stop. The fear, which two hours before had been vaguely distant, moved up and took hold of me. If the fascists had been in Motril, three hours ago, they must be up to us soon; there was no time to lose. I wanted to put a good five hours' walking between myself and the enemy; but Rathbone was looking about.

'Swell: Here we are, Tom, just the thing.' At the back of one of the cottages he had found a donkey stable, low-roofed and empty; the floor was covered with straw and dung, soft and warm. So we lay down and Rathbone turned over to sleep.

I only dozed fitfully. Outside I could hear the shuffling feet, endlessly moving by, the cries, the whines, the low 'Aice' and, every now and then, a confused shouting which made the fear leap up and claw at my chest and heart. And I would creep out and round the outbuilding and look into the road. But the sight was always the same, seemingly the same people with the same actions of exhaustion, the same cries of fear and sorrow, flickering in the lurid light of the flames from the blazing palm leaves.

It was easy to see why the stable had remained empty; no one dared to stay that long. I joined a group by one of the fires; listlessly they made room for me; but in a few minutes the children were woken from their sleep and pushed back on to the road. Another group would come up and take their place, add a few more sticks and leaves, and, in ten minutes, set off again, to be succeeded by yet another.

Eventually I crept back into the stable and lay down again, my nerves listening through a troubled sleep for any variation in the now familiar rhythm of sounds, any change which might indicate the end of the march or the coming of the enemy.

The Doctor, too, slept fitfully, and was repeatedly sick, it was the smell of the dung. But we stayed there inside, until, at about five, I urged the Doctor to start again. The procession seemed to be thinning a little; and we hadn't gone far, when the first grey light of dawn

appeared. Then two dimmed headlights came round the corner; it was our lorry.

Almeria, Hesketh reported, was in complete confusion; the people were streaming in, and there was no provision for them, no shelter, no food, but he had managed to obtain enough petrol for one more trip.

'This time I want you to drive,' Rathbone said to me, 'and Hesketh's to go with you. Hesketh's to go to bed at Almeria as soon as you get there, and you come back and pick me up. I'll be on the road.'

A new load, women and babies, was piled in, the doors shut and I drove off.

Hesketh had procured from Almeria two guards who were placed on the running-board each side, carrying rifles.

'Christ, it was a terrible journey!' he told David a little melodramatically. 'The militiamen along the road are getting tough. They've got the jitters. Trying to jump a ride. They'll steal our petrol if they get half a chance. The great thing is to go as fast as you can. Don't on any account stop. Don't even slow down, or give 'em a chance of jumping the truck. And if people won't get out of the way, ride 'em down.'

By the time we got going it was light. I nosed my way gently through the crowd, blowing the horn, and, presently, the guards, thinking that there was still room after all on the lorry, allowed two men to jump up and clamber on to it.

Almeria was almost unrecognizable when we reached it. The quiet little seaport we had left the day before was jammed to overflowing with refugees, still constantly flowing in. The streets were a black shifting mass of people, who pushed their way up and down, undirected and still unfed. Hesketh steered us to the hospital on the outskirts of the town, a high Moorish building, still surprisingly empty.

In the centre of the town, where we came back to get the necessary documents for more petrol, we met an official of the Government, who had hurried down from Valencia to report on the situation. I suggested to him that I should take out a load of food to the refugees.

'Food?' said the official. 'We've got no food; there's none in the town. We've sent for some, and it ought to be coming soon. But this is all there is here. Have it; you must be hungry.' And he offered me two figs. Then he asked us to go along to the Civil Governor and tell him about the situation. 'You're the only people who've been down that road. The Governor wants to see you.'

The Governor seemed capable and efficient; he was pale and rather

stout, with an intelligent face. Five people were talking to him at once. Messengers kept hurrying in and out with dispatches, and his three telephones were ringing incessantly: secretaries answered them. We told him that he must expect at least a hundred thousand refugees in all and showed him the place on the map where we had been; and finally asked him to send out lorries to bring in the refugees 'Otherwise many must die of exposure, exhaustion or hunger.'

'Couldn't you send food, and lorries for the sick and exhausted?'

'It isn't possible,' he said, striding up and down the room. 'How can I? I've got no food—we were short before—now we've got none. As for lorries, I've got to get troops together. Soldiers are the first thing. I must send some soldiers down. The enemy must be checked.'

We were interrupted by an important telephone call. He answered it and came back to us. 'Two more aeroplanes down near Motril; that makes four this morning. This is terrible. . . . Thank you, gentlemen, I will do what I can, but soldiers first; the lorries shall take the soldiers and bring back the refugees. We must do it at once. Juan!' A secretary hurried up and was given orders, the telephone rang, dispatch riders came and went, the Governor turned away. But Hesketh still wanted something, a vale for petrol. Over his shoulder the governor gave the order to another secretary. 'And one thing more,' Hesketh insisted, in spite of the telephones, the secretaries, the dispatches.

'No, come on,' I said, 'he's far too busy.' Neither Hesketh nor Rathbone would ever realize their comparative unimportance.

'No, we've got to have 'em, better guards than those two, they were no bloody use,' Hesketh said, and he insisted on explaining, slowly and circumstantially to the harassed governor. The guards were granted, and I was asked to take an interpreter with them, to report on the situation.

The interpreter was a business man, too carefully oiled and groomed; I mistrusted him from the first. Whether he was a fascist or not he was certainly nervous. We hadn't been going fifteen miles before he began suggesting that they had gone far enough. There were plenty of people there, he said; why not pick *them* up? He frankly didn't believe me when I told him that we had to go right on to pick up the Doctor; he expected the fascists round every corner, and was not reassured by my telling him that we could go another hundred and twenty kilometres in perfect safety.

At about the eighty mark, we met Rathbone riding on the running-board of a car.

‘I’ve picked up three aviators here, badly wounded—rushing ‘em back to hospital—got to operate. Came down over my head. You go on as far as you can. See you in Almeria.’ And the doctor was gone.

We went on until we came to the village where Rathbone and I had slept. There, sitting on the steps, was a crowd of despondent women, who looked as if they had given up the struggle. I stopped the car and turned it round.

It was the same procedure as before, but with myself in charge I realized it more vividly. I found myself, that is, the centre of a howling, crying mob, who clutched me and held up their children, imploring, beseeching, begging, and clung to the lorry, so that I couldn’t even open it. The guards had remained sitting passively in the front seat with the interpreter between them. Without undoing the back I went round and asked the interpreter to come and help. Reluctantly he and the guards came out.

‘Tell them to be quiet,’ I told the interpreter. ‘And that I’m taking only the children and the sick.’

This produced only another surging rush from the crowd, who were all sick and mostly had children. The guards and the interpreter edged away and left me to manage by myself.

There was no question of selection. This was the first time I had seen them plainly in the daylight. The eyes of the women were running with pus and gum, their faces blotched with tears, dust, and suffering. The babies they held up wore, for the most part, one small garment, and their legs and bottoms, which were bare, were a mass of sores and rashes.

My only piece of selection was to put in a woman with a broken leg. I kept shouting, ‘Women and children only,’ and the few men there, responding, helped the women and children up. Like frightened animals they clambered in and herded at the entrance, refusing to move up. I swore and shouted and pushed while around me shouted and pushed the three hundred for whom there were no places.

Things on the road had got really desperate by now, for the tougher and fitter had got further on; only the sick and the ailing were stranded up here, and those who had started late.

The lorry was packed full to suffocation, and still the people below pressed round it entreating and beseeching.

‘Not for me, Companero, it’s not for me I’m asking. But take the child. Save my child.’ ‘Holy Mary, save the little one.’ ‘Mother of God, don’t leave us.’

They put their arms round me; they fell to the ground and clutched my knees, holding up their babies and imploring my compassion.

And then from out of a house came a man carrying in his arms a little boy unconscious with a high fever. 'He's dying,' the man said. 'You must take him to a hospital, you must. You can't leave him here to die.' Tears were running down his brown wrinkled face; the mother followed, weeping too; with a baby sucking at her breast, she looked at me, dumbly, imploring.

There didn't seem to be an inch of room; but running my eye over the load I noticed one woman who had no child; she looked strong and hefty, and healthier than the rest. She must come out, I explained to my helpers. 'Come on, Camarada, you must come out and make room for the child.' I jumped up and caught her wrist; she struggled and screamed, with heartrending, tortured cries; she seized the side of the lorry and gripped it with all her strength. Getting angry, I wrenched her hand free and forced her to the back of the lorry, jumped down myself and pulled her off.

Through her tortured screams the woman lifted up her skirt and exposed her body, pinching out her belly with her hand. She was great with child. In an agony of remorse I helped her in again; her screams turned to tears of gratitude; she put her arms round me, called me saviour, and began to climb up again. In her overwhelming relief she couldn't restrain her water which trickled down on to my head and shoulders as I helped her up.

Still there was the father weeping and holding out his dying son; but the commotion with the pregnant woman seemed to have cleared a little space. The mother and baby were hauled up and the woman with the broken leg was given the dying boy to hold. This was the last inch of room. And as I turned round from fastening up the back of the lorry, the women were kneeling in the road holding up their children towards me.

I tried to tell them: 'I'll be back again soon; make on as best you can. There'll be other lorries coming.'

I had forgotten about the seats in front where the guards were sitting with the interpreter. If they were turned out that would give room for several more. And now standing looking reproachfully at me was the father of the dying boy, with eight other children round him, all under ten. Two were weeping copiously and uncontrollably; I asked the interpreter who they were.

'The rest of the children of the mothers inside.'

The weeping ones were the brothers of the boy who was dying. I explained to the father, 'I've no room for you but I'll take the

children,' and he pushed them all into the cabin, where they squeezed in on the floor and on the seat. The brothers bubbled over into louder tears at being separated. 'Padre, Padre,' they called through the window. Three wounded militia boys had climbed on to the roof; I didn't disturb them. The guards and the interpreter sulked on the running-board. There was room for another two or three on the front wings, but I decided to reserve that in case we came across any more wounded on the road. Besides, I felt that the load was as much already as the lorry would stand.

When we were forty miles from home, I decided to fill up the spare spaces, and choosing a group of three wounded militia men, fitted them in, one between each headlamp and wing, and one on the roof.

And shortly afterwards the trouble began.

For some time I had thought that the clutch on the lorry was wrong, but the last two days had been too exacting for us to pay much attention to it. Now suddenly it began to get worse: a small incline and the engine barely pulled up it; the motor raced, and our speed got slower and slower.

It couldn't be disregarded. We had to abandon the men we had just picked up, and the boys on the roof. They had been so delighted and pleased at their unexpected luck; now they looked puzzled and reproachful, as they joined the walking procession again.

But it didn't make the least difference. The engine went faster and faster, the lorry went slower and slower, until finally, half-way up a small hill, it stopped.

'Get them all out,' the interpreter suggested, 'then it may go.'

I knew it wouldn't, but I went round to the back to explain.

Directly I opened the doors, the hot rancid smell from the inside hit me in the face, the smell of rancid sweat, garlic, urine and vomit, in thick hot waves. And I realized at once that it would be very difficult to move them. As soon as I suggested it, they clung a little tighter to the sides, and looked at me with the uncomprehending glance of animals, afraid they would be hurt. I went back to the interpreter.

'You must walk to the nearest telephone and get help. Ring the Sanidad and the Civil Governor,' I gave names and instructions, but all the time I knew that the interpreter would do nothing.

Then I remembered the dying boy, and remembered, too, that somewhere at the very inside of the lorry there was a small bottle of brandy. I must get the people out.

I went round to the back again. The boy was still unconscious, still had a high fever, and was shivering: he had been very sick. The

atmosphere inside was unimaginable; they must be moved, for that if nothing else. I pleaded and argued and persuaded in my few words of Spanish. When I tried to force them they clung to the lorry and fought. But with the departure of the interpreter, the guards seemed to become more friendly.

The sun was shining and warm; the grass was soft; we pulled out some mackintoshes from inside and spread them on the grass. Frightened and suspicious, still suspecting a trick, they at last allowed themselves to be persuaded and climbed slowly out. Each one that came down seemed to be more bedraggled, dirty, wretched and ill than the last.

I took off my coat and wrapped the sick child in it, and, finding the brandy, forced some down its throat. It lay on the cushions in an unresponsive, huddled heap, and the two brothers came shyly back into the lorry and stroked it, and, sitting down beside it, let the tears pour slowly down their cheeks. I tried unavailingly to cheer them up, and then took the bottle of brandy to the people outside.

They were sitting pathetically miserable on the grass, and every single one, from the oldest mother to the youngest baby was crying, a continual loud wailing, rising up from them, as they rocked gently to and fro in grief. Beside us, the long string of stricken people ceaselessly and remorselessly padded past. In front the wretched bedraggled party, each woman clutching a tiny crying baby to her naked breast and crying in time to their cries.

I took round the cognac and gave a mouthful to each; I took off my sweater and put it on a twelve-year-old who was complaining of the cold; and the child looked so ridiculous that several of the children stopped crying and smiled—a little wanly.

Determined to follow this up, we moved among the group, encouraging the mothers and ragging the boys. And in an hour we were rewarded; they had all stopped crying. Some of them even began to laugh, the rest sat patient. Soon, we told them, there would be another lorry, any moment now. They needn't worry.

Now that they were calm some of the women began to talk; I could make out the gist of it. They were all from Malaga; some from beyond the town. They had been on the march three, four, five, and some even six days, and they had had no food. All of them were nursing mothers; and I noticed their feet blistered, torn, bleeding, scratched, shredded; many of them could hardly move.

They talked fast and bitterly and I only understood a little, but their gestures and the words I did grasp were enough. Only two had husbands alive; they had left them to come in the lorry; the rest were dead, shot in Malaga. Malaga and the road out had been an

inferno. Shelled from the sea, bombed from the air, and then machine-gunned. The terror was alive and blistering in their eyes as they imitated the stutter of machine-guns. Soft at first; then louder as their hands described 'planes swooping: sharp and powerful as their hands dived. Only one family there was left complete.

The tears started up again, and they leaned on me, touched me and kissed my hand, 'But what shall we do now, Companero? No homes, no man, no future. Companero, what shall become of us and our children?'

Unable any longer to keep up the pretence of keeping up their spirits, I walked away from them; but it was impossible to avoid it; the misery was inescapably there, on the road, too, crawling past, and fifty thousand still to come.

It was another wonderful sunset; the sky flushed crimson and gold and rose, as the sun disappeared. But its importance for the road was not in terms of beauty, but of heat. My party was beginning to cry again. One or two started; the mothers joined in, and soon they were all at it. I went over to them; they looked up at me, and cried, 'Frio, Frio, cold, cold,' and begged to be allowed inside the lorry again. None of them thought of moving there without my permission. And when I agreed, they were pathetically grateful, as if I were conferring on them the greatest blessing in the world; they kissed my hands again, calling me their saviour. Once inside, they sat in their self-generated heat, the children mostly sleeping, the women whimpering.

The night dragged intolerably; I had to stay outside to try to stop a car and get a message back to Almeria. But no one would stop, any more than, earlier, we had stopped. A night dew added to the misery of the cold and the darkness and 'Frio, Frio,' rose up from the endless dragging procession.

And all the time people would keep detaching themselves from the crowd and, coming up to me, murmur their sorrow as if I, because I stood outside it, must in some way be able to relieve them. I could do nothing but touch them with sympathy, old men, old women and children, and they merged back into the dark mass of the crowd re-adding their individual sorrow to the collective agony.

Some I had to help. Once, I noticed a little boy who couldn't have been more than eight, standing swaying with his finger in his mouth, looking vacantly at the lorry. Thinking that he was lost, I went over to him and asked where his mother and father were. The child who could only speak in a hoarse whisper answered unemotionally and

duelly, 'Dead, all dead.' He had walked from Malaga by himself. Five days on the road, alone and without food. And now he was complaining of the cold. I picked him up and put him into the cabin on top of the others; it was at least warm there. He dropped instantly asleep.

Later, there came a woman with a son of about twelve. 'He's so cold.' She stood there, stating it as a mere fact. She was too tired to gesture or to plead. Her movements, as she walked up, were the movements of a woman of eighty, slow, shuffled, tiny, stiff steps with no trace of spring in them; the boy was sobbing. Four days they had been walking without food. They waited there, not asking, nor pleading, waiting as if it was their last hope that I should make some saving suggestion.

The cabin of the lorry was packed with children, lying on top of each other on the seats and the floor. But I determined to squeeze one more in, and took the child round. 'But not without my mother,' the boy protested, and in a last access of strength broke away and ran to her. She persuaded him to go in, and, as he went away, sank down where she stood on the road, drawing her cloak over her head.

And then a boy of about fifteen, long-legged, overgrown. Thin, pale and hoarse, he had been walking for five days, alone. He came up to me, too tired to speak. He pointed interrogatively at the lorry. Gently I shook my head. 'It's full, I'm sorry.' There was the faintest shrug of the shoulders in resignation, and then he span, toppled and fell: out: done: it had been his last effort.

They were a few out of the thousands. 'Feed my sheep.' The text kept running through my head with the derisive irony of a phrase of music. 'Feed my sheep.' And I suddenly found myself cursing and shouting at the top of my voice: 'Well, why don't you feed your bloody sheep? . . . Why don't you?'

Still the people shuffled by, and one would detach herself and come up to me and dumbly turn away again from my ineffective sympathy. Still from inside the lorry the crying of the women and children rose and swelled and fell away again, and steam slowly ascended from the foetid atmosphere inside.

Once I lit a match to examine the unconscious child. And from the people on the road a frightened cry went up: 'Lights, put out the light,' and the women inside, with tears in their eyes, begged me to put it out. When I asked the guards what was the matter, they pointed down the coast to the lights of a battleship thirty miles away; there was a faint sound of firing. 'They are afraid she will see the light and bomb us.'

At half-past three there was a roar in the distance, and the lights of powerful cars. Thirty fast lorries ploughed an opening through the crowd, by the power of their sirens and headlights, taking no notice of the cry of 'lights, lights.' As they slowed down to pass them, I saw that they were a company of the International Brigade going down to Motril; no one cheered or cared.

An hour later after many useless attempts, I managed to stop a car going to Almeria. It was a staff car and one of the officers could speak French. He was most sympathetic and asked for written instructions, which I hastily scribbled. 'It probably won't be till morning,' the officer said, 'but I promise you something will be done.'

By this time I was very tired; it was my second night on the road, and it was very cold. I decided to make room for myself in the front of the lorry by taking one of the children on my knees.

I opened the door and shook the child nearest, half-ashamed of myself for waking it: only at last did it sit up, looking round sleepily. I tried to explain what I was doing, but the boy couldn't understand and I had to pick it up; there wasn't enough room to get in without first putting it outside. It cried out protesting, 'No, no, you can't turn me out,' and clutching the steering wheel, clung desperately. I pulled its hands free, set it for a moment in the road, and climbed in. But when I turned to pick it up again, after squeezing a place among the jumbled bodies of the other children, it had begun to stumble off uncomprehendingly down the road, crying and rubbing its eyes with the back of its hands.

I called to it and leaning out, drew it up, set it on my knees, and slammed the door. As it understood, it gave a tired smile, pushed up its face against my cheek and kissed me; and in almost immediately the same movement it fell back asleep against my shoulder.

The sun was just rising when a relief lorry rumbled up beside us. Soon they were all packed into the new lorry. They had brought a rope to tow us back with, but it looked too thin. The broken lorry was filled up with more people; there was no limit now to the load; they sat on the headlights, the wings, the running-board and the roofs.

My mistrust of the rope proved well founded: every time the towing lorry changed gear, it broke. It must have broken twenty times in the thirty miles; and by the time we reached Almeria it was half-past ten: and the rope was so short that the lorries almost touched.

CLIVE BRANSON

SAN PEDRO

A FOREIGN darkness fills the air to-night.
The moon betrays this unfamiliar scene.
Strange creatures, shadow-ghosts of what had been
Live with no aim than groping through half light,
Talk dreamily, walk wandering, delight
In trivial acts that formerly would mean
Nothing. A livid memory, this lean
Ill-clad rabble of a lost dreaded might.

Look longer, deeper, the accustomed eyes
Know more than quick appearances can tell.
These fools, this shoddy crowd, this dirt, are lies
Their idiot captors wantonly compel.
These men are giants chained down from the skies
To congregate an old and empty hell.

TOM WINTRINGHAM

IT'S A BOHUNK

THE dark green 'plane went away without dropping anything, and we got out of the irrigation ditch. The path to the river curved down by the dead mule and the Dimmies' kitchen. The river was a disappointment, almost dry.

'Walk up a bit.' At the bend a pool shone among the hot stones; part of it was dark with the shadow of the railway bridge. A naked man was sloshing in the water. He could not swim; there was not enough water.

'Haya, pal' said Hank and pulled his shirt off. The naked man bubbled something and waved his foot. Then he burst out laughing and gave an unorthodox version of our army's salute, using his right arm and his left leg; as he lay on his back in the water he clenched his fist and shoved it up and at the same time raised a square-toed foot and gnarled the toes together, as if to make a second saluting fist.

This amused him a good deal; he shook with laughter and the water splashed round. Touching dry stones the water sizzled. Spain in August is hotter than Hell (and less safe: Hell's underground).

'*Salud, eh?*' said Hank tolerantly. He was of the Lincoln battalion and saluted officers only when he forgot himself. But he let others salute if they liked.

I was sitting down to get my *alpargatas* off. I returned the salute with one of these rope-soled canvas shoes in my hand, thinking: that fellow has sharp eyes to spot the three little gold bars over my shirt pocket.

The naked man got out of the water. That was necessary because there was only room for two to lie full length in the pool. When he sat down in the shade, away from the blink of sun on water, I saw that he was short, broad, wide, square. And hairy; but patches of hair had been shaved off and scars showed every two or three inches from forehead to shins. They were grey-blue-green and red scars: some of them crossed as if he had been tattooed with chicken-wire.

'Who's your pal?' I asked Hank. He answered: 'Him? It's a Bohunk.' Hank was in a hurry to get in the deeper end of the pool ahead of me.

One of the 'Dimmies,' then. Americans called most of the Dimitroff

battalion Bohunks. I could not talk any of that battalion's five languages, so I tried the 'Spanish' of the International Brigades: 'Bombas?' I asked, nodding at his chest. 'Si, bomba aviaci^{on} *acqui*.' He pointed to a point ten feet away from him: yes, a bomb from a 'plane had fallen there. He looked at the scars: 'treinta-seiz heridas. . . .' And then, after those thirty-six wounds, hand-grenades had given him seven more.

Hank shook his straggle of wet red beard. 'Yeh, 's a boy. One of Chip-chop's or the Division's scouts. Came over with us at Pingarron and got all those splinters in him. Then he held the bomb-hole—big deep hole it was—for a couple of days while we could sap forward to it. Way up the slope it was. He wouldn't let anyone else in it; said it was his bomb.'

'Two days? You took your time getting the sap forward.'

Hank answered: 'Warn't enough of us to hold our trenches, far less dig new ones.' And we both thought of Pingarron Hill, that looks down towards the Jarama river on one side and Madrid's last main road on the other. Too many boys from Britain and the States lie on its slopes and in the valleys that flank it.

'First night,' Hank went on, 'the Moors came out and dropped a couple of grenades almost on this Bohunk. He heard the pineapples rolling down into his bomb-hole and lit out quick: that's the scars on his back. Second night he lay outside the hole as soon as it was dark and gave them the works while they were still creely-crawlin' towards him. 'S a boy.'

I lay in the tepid water and did not care if he was a boy or not. Tomorrow we were going to take Quinto, one of the keys to Aragon. There had been no transport, but the Brigade was hijacking its way into position, stopping every lorry it saw. There had been new machine-guns—why did we always get machine-guns of a type entirely unknown to us two days before a push? But we had tested them all and instructed most of our gunners on them. That had been my job: for twenty hours I had done it. It was done. I lay in the trickle of water and wondered if I was tired.

Half an hour before I had been wondering if I was too sleepy to eat or too hungry to sleep. Hank's invitation to 'swim' had caught me in this indecision: now I knew that I would soon go back to the tall rows of maize where my kit lay and sleep till evening. Brigade staff would move in the night. . . .

Hank kept on babbling about Bohunks, Polacks and Wops. I paid no attention. My head and shoulders were in the shadow of the railway bridge; the sun could not catch much of the rest of me,

though I could feel it through the couple of inches of water that covered me. The little pause of peace that comes before real fighting was on me. Nothing on earth, I thought, could disturb me now.

The one thing that could disturb me came, not on the earth but in the sky.

A poet has described the beginning of that sound, the feel of it in the air before it is a sound. The loaded bombers crawling across the sky reach the senses in a faint trembling of not-yet-noise, like the trembling of a baited deep-sea line.

Then the trembling grows to an actual sound, and the sound climbs in the mind to dominate it. Behaviour begins to replace ordinary living. The conditioned thing, the way of action trained into you, replaces all normal thinking and deciding. Hank half sat up, then turned on his face swearing softly to himself. The Bohunk flattened his squareness down. I pulled my knees up to my chin, my back to the bombers. My eyes blinked at the steep river bank a hundred feet away. Too far, far, far—the word wrapped itself into the engine's rising drone. The shadow of the bridge made me sweat.

They were over us. The sound drilled at the backs of our necks. We could feel them above us bigger than all the archangels of heaven, all-seeing, all-powerful. God, why were they so slow? The seconds stretched out on the rack of the sound of the engines. None of us looked up.

We had been taught not to look up. From cover and open country, the green or brown or rock-grey of Spain, faces show, can be seen from the air. Men who lie quiet, face down, or stoop or crouch in stillness, are not easy for pilots to see.

Some of us had fought a year of war under the wings of enemy bombers. We did not feel the need to look at them.

We were doing as we had been trained to do. In fact it would have made little difference if we had looked up: perhaps we might have been more difficult to see. Our bodies, pink-brown, and our burnt faces, would not show very clearly against the grey-white stones in the river-bed. Perhaps the Bohunk's black hair would show more than his brown face. But we had been taught to keep our faces down and stay still. . . .

Bombs scream. When you first hear them you are surprised, sometimes lifted to your feet, by the warning note in that scream. It is louder, and lasts longer, is more terrifying, than the scream of a shell; gunners' gifts often reach you before you hear them, but bombs take a mile of air and wrench it apart to tell you they are coming. Louder than any klaxon, steep up the scale as the bomb drops faster, the racking

yelp makes the sky into a spinning blue circular saw shearing through the bones that cover your head. The bombs screamed: for a pulse-beat we were not alive: one bomb was coming near.

Two fell very near us. The sound of a bomb exploding some distance away, once you are used to it, is a relief—that one has missed. But you cannot get used to a bomb falling really near: the shock, blast, air-wave from its explosion wrenches at your throat, you choke; your eyes are blacked out; the noise of the explosion is not a noise but the defeat of your ears—there will never be any noises again.

The three 'planes were swinging up the sky to turn, their engines stating arrogant jeering imperious power. Stones lifted by the explosions fell with a tap-clatter (so hearing was possible, after all!) A pebble had tapped my knee; a little blue-hot sliver of metal fell onto my shoulder and the burn stabbed me; my fingers jerked to brush it off and were stabbed.

While the dust and fume was still in the air Hank jumped from the water and grabbed his shoes. 'Stop,' I said. My ears were ringing and I felt I said it very weakly indeed. Hank was furious: the curse-words jammed in his mouth. He was only getting his shoes, to be ready to run if those — got out of eye-shot. . . .

Running to the river-bank? Not he! As he flopped back into the pool the Bohunk dropped at the edge of it between us. He had been a little higher than we were. A new white weal showed where a flying stone had caught him. And along his left arm a thin line of dark red came very slowly, as blood comes from a razor-cut. 'Hullo, *herido*?' I said.

Yes, he answered: a wound, a very slight one. The other, he said as if regretfully, was not a wound, only a stone-graze. He did not know the Spanish word for stone and picked one up to show us his meaning. Then, as if reproving himself for that amount of movement, he put the stone back very carefully.

The 'planes, turning, came to my eyes and were for a moment the graceful fascinating things I have always loved to watch. Then I put my head down, guiltily. They were the enemies' eyes.

'*Volver?*' said the Bohunk. Yes, they were turning. We must again be logs or corpses, to their eyes. They had got within twenty feet of the bridge, first shot; they would try again.

They had finished turning, were drumming straight up the road. 'Jeez!' groaned Hank, 'are they trying to kill us, or what?' Again the bomb-scream tore through my head and back and seemed to reach, white-hot, to my guts. A man afraid curls himself round his guts to protect them: poor protection, our knotted muscles and tubed

bones, but under bombing or shell-fire most men try to cover somehow eyes, with their hands, stomach and sex with their legs. Hank's knees, like mine, were almost up to his chin. But the Bohunk lay between us flat, straight, square on his solid belly.

Six bombs this time, none quite so near to us, but one struck high up on the earth approach to the bridge and burst our way. A great lump of earth knocked me on the back and winded me; I gulped air, whining. Hank got his share of the dirt. But the Bohunk's legs and backside were ripped by flying metal that had passed just beyond our curled-up toes. The back of one thigh was mashed spouting redness. I saw it just at my elbow as I fought for breath, fought to stop sobbing and free my eyes from the tears and the shooting stars.

The cloud of earth and dust was settling round us as my breath came back. The Bohunk clutched his thigh, twisting round to look at the wounds. Hank reached for my shirt and tore it in half. And the loosed engines of the three 'planes climbing and turning threw down their intolerable clangour at us.

If I had not been winded I might have run. It would have been wrong: our whole army corps was there, round Hijar and up to the Ebro, and the enemy did not know it yet. Everywhere round me men were hiding, dead-still in the fly-stirring heat, because the enemy's eyes were over us. It would not have mattered if his 'plane had seen three men near the bridge: but if it had seen three men near the bridge and six on the road and two in this village and seven on a hill-side—then those winged eyes would have reported: movement. And movement reported there, near that unexpected almost peaceful bit of front, might mean that we failed to surprise them to-morrow; which would be suicide.

This I knew. Yet I might have run for cover, away from the bridge. Fear is a strong master. I was not able to run while the dust-cloud hid me. Hank, who was afraid also, had not run. He helped the Bohunk wrap half my shirt round his leg and backside. The wounds were not deep; the blood that was staining the pool was not coming with the bright jetting flow that means a severed artery. 'No es mucho,' said the Bohunk. And again the 'planes swung round the sky to a point where I could see them. They were lower. Were they coming back?

'How many wounds?' asked the Bohunk. 'Six,' I said. He added six to the forty-three he already possessed, and shook his head. 'Fifty would be a better number,' he said. Hank put his head down on his arms and laughed. Then swore.

The noise of the engines had lessened. Were they going away? Or had they throttled down to come lower? I waited, calling to help me

a man killed in my first day's fighting and a woman who had held me back from dying, by her own live strength and unwavering twenty-four-hour awakeness, through weeks of typhoid. And I summoned to keep me there, naked on that grey altar of small stones, memory of the fact that the man I thought of as my leader had once been fool enough to call me a coward. We waited.

The engines could be heard plainly, but they were not loud. The 'planes were not coming round in a tight circle as they had done before; that was clear. I did not know how close I was to panic until the Bohunk suddenly gripped my right hand with his left. He jerked out a word that was a statement, not an appeal or a curse. What the word meant I did not know: but I knew that it meant the fear was shadowing us again. Yet I was already released from fear; stronger than the courage of the dead or of my woman was the physical grip of his square hand, the friendship of men who know how to die and live. I heard the 'whick, whick' of propellers turning slowly and knew that one of the 'planes was only a couple of hundred feet above us. . . .

No bomb dropped. The 'plane's engines took up their masterful tune, and it climbed back to its companions. Twenty seconds more, and they were thin-pencilled wings a mile away. 'Say when it's O.K., captain,' came in a subdued voice from Hank.

I sat up and watched them lift away from us. 'O.K., brothers.' We busied ourselves with shoes and picked up our clothes, not putting them on. We wrapped the second half of my shirt round the Bohunk's thigh, knotting the ramshackle bandage in place with a belt. He put his right arm round Hank's neck and walked. I offered to help on the other side, but he said, 'O.K.' and grinned and used his left hand to hold the bandage in place.

We got to the river bank. 'Take him to the German doctor, Hank.' 'Sure,' said Hank. But long-legged Willy the doctor was already coming down the path to see. . . . As usual he was sardonic and absurd, in precise impossible German-English. 'I forget my education. The vague painters call a scene so attractive "The Three Graces." But I will be more particular: this your companion youth who exhibits so blond and proud a nakedness is Venus; you, my dear Staff-instructor-captain, must Minerva of the wisdoms be; but what is my patient?' As he said these things he was stripping off the shirt-bandage and doing a rough and painful first examination. The Bohunk grinned and grumbled, saying *eyea!* occasionally—which is much more sensible than proudly biting your lip and not letting a squeak out.

I growled at the doctor, as I pulled my trousers on. Then his curious determination to seem civilized captured me, as it always had done.

'Your patient, doctor? It's a Bohunk—seems a sufficient rank. But if you insist on being classical, wasn't the third of them Juno—a close acquaintance of Mars and Vulcan?'

The doctor nodded. 'It is to be regretted if so much beauty is scattered, I think. I will keep him here for you.' 'Thank you and damn your eyes!'

But his threat worked to schedule. In a few days—Quinto taken and my shoulder splinted—the Bohunk came to see me in hospital. He brought an American who talked his language and gave me a hatful of 'crackers.' The Bohunk was in great glee: in counting his wounds we had forgotten the first long slash in the arm that a fragment had given him under the bridge. With this reckoned in, the total was fifty. Was not that a nice figure?

I agreed.

Before they left my bed I asked the American: what are Bohunks, anyway? 'Oh, they come from Father Christmas' country. . . .'

And it was much later, when I had left Spain and that war, I realized that the people Americans call Bohunks come from Prague way and are really called Czechs.

HEINRICH DUERMAYER

THE DEATH OF KARL FOKKER

Translated from the German by Charles Ashleigh

A true story of the former Chapaev Battalion of the International Brigade

IN Requena the Chapaev Battalion received fresh reinforcements.

Everything seemed strange to the newcomers—the experienced old soldiers, the strict military discipline, the foreign town. Add to this their complete ignorance of Spanish conditions and of the language, and you will realize that things were not too easy for these recruits.

But there was always one of the 'old-timers' to help them—Karl Fokker, he was, a Young Communist from the Sixteenth District of Vienna. He told the new men about the Teruel fighting, as all the others did, but he didn't talk only about deeds of heroism. He also tried to tell them how they should find and use shelter, explained the way the artillery fire worked and the air bombings, and how to pick places for posting machine-guns. And he did it all in such a pleasant comradely way that no one felt that he was being patronized. Whenever one of the new men was standing around at a loss, maybe when packing knapsacks or putting on equipment, Karl would always be found there, smiling and friendly, helping and explaining.

Yes, Karl was the good angel of the new recruits. And he became their unofficial delegate. Whenever a new man had a wish or complaint of some kind he would go right away to Karl, and Karl would fix it.

Then came Pitres, in the Sierra Nevada. The Chapaev Battalion had driven the fascists far into the mountains. It was comparatively quiet now, in the beginning of March. There were occasional exchanges of rifle fire, but, particularly at night, it was pretty quiet. From our positions at Pitres we looked up at the snow-covered summits, and we knew that somewhere beyond the snowfields the Lenin Battalion had chased out the fascists and now held the positions there. The whole wide space in between, as well as the peaks, was unoccupied. Under certain circumstances, of course, this could be dangerous. So two crews of the Machine Gun Company and a section of infantry received orders to proceed to the snowfields and to take up suitable positions there.

We installed our machine-gun posts at a height of nearly 1000 feet, amidst rocks, ice and snow. Under some overhanging rocks we piled

up walls of stones. Covers were stretched over these, and there was our camp. We had provisions for a few days, but nothing to guard against the cold. Our uniforms were good ones, but after all they were not intended as clothing for high altitudes. The sentries on the ridge had to be relieved every half or quarter of an hour. Their eyes were inflamed, and the gale almost swept them off their feet. All you could see was mist and whirling snow. All you could hear was the howling of the gale and a thin metallic piping as the wind flung the tiny ice-crystals against your armoured shield or steel helmet. The sixty or seventy feet from the machine-gun nest to the camp was a difficult trip. The only way to do it was to crawl on all-fours. Stand up, and the wind knocked you down again.

So it went on, day and night, without a break. Nothing but bacon for breakfast, dinner and supper, with hard bread, and now and again a shot of cognac. It was of course impossible to build a fire. And how could you sleep in such cold? All of us were cold, and wet through and through. The snow blew from all sides into the primitive lair we had built, settling more and more thickly on the comrades who, to keep just a bit warm, lay packed closely together. Melted snow trickled down the sides of the rocks. The snow which had swept into our shelter melted under us. We lay in water, covered with snow. Our hands and feet were numbed, we could hardly hold our rifles. Exhaustion and lack of sleep forced our eyes to close, but no one was allowed to sleep. We had agreed to keep awake by every possible means, because we knew that to sleep meant the end.

Within us the urge to self-preservation warred with our sense of duty. We could not make up our minds to abandon the post. It was with a good deal of self-reproach, and only after two of our comrades had lost the use of their feet, and a third the use of his hands, that we finally decided to go back down to Pitres. Some of the lads, who had taken their boots off so that we could rub their feet to prevent them losing them, could only wrap cloths round them, either because it was impossible for them to get their boots on or because their boots had been lost in the snow somewhere.

After marching—or rather crawling—for hours, we got back to Pitres. It was pouring with rain. The battalion commander fell on our necks and told us that, two days ago, he had sent us a messenger with an order to abandon the post, as well as two mules with rations. But they had not been able to find us in the snowstorm.

And there was Karl too! He embraced every one of us, stroking and patting us, hardly knowing how to express his joy at seeing us back safe again. On this particular day Karl happened to be off duty until eight o'clock in the evening. So he looked up a suitable house for us

and led us to it. Then he searched all the neighbouring houses for straw, mattresses and blankets, and brought them round. We lay or sat around half-dead in the rooms. We could not stir. But Karl, our guardian angel, looked after everything. He fixed up beds for the sixteen of us of the two gun crews with straw and mattresses. He brought in wood, or, when he could not find any, he took down doors or broke up chairs. At any rate, there was soon a great roaring fire on the hearth, and that was all he was worrying about. Then he went all over Pitres to find something good for us to eat. He got the Machine-Gun Company kitchen to work, and made tea for us. He took one fellow's boots off, rubbed another's frozen face and hands, helped another out of his soaking clothes, rubbed him down with a towel and sat him in front of the fire. He brought in the food and shared it out. A mother could not have taken greater care of her children.

At eight o'clock he said: 'Well, boys, everything's fixed all right now. Have a good sleep. I've got to go on duty till to-morrow evening.' Another couple of friendly words, and he was gone.

Well, we slept, or we did not sleep. Perhaps we were too tired for a really sound sleep. At any rate, we lay in a sort of doze on the beds Karl had fixed for us, now and again blinking into the blaze that Karl had kindled.

Heavy steps suddenly. The door opened and the snow swept in. Two comrades, Theo and Bert, came in, their faces darkly sad.

What had happened? They told us.

The relief crew, with Karl, had made their way to the post. The men were assigned their hours of sentry duty. Karl's turn came at midnight. It was very quiet—just a single shot, now and again, from over there. Karl sat by the machine-gun and looked out into the night. Silence. Then came another shot, just one small shot.

But Karl cried out: 'It's got me, Lambert!' Our comrades jumped up, carried him to a sheltered spot. Too late. Karl was already dead.

No offensive, no attacking party from the other side. Just one shot, fired by some sentry over there at random into the dark.

'We've brought him down with us now,' said Theo and Bert. 'To-morrow we'll bury him properly.'

Every one of us shed tears. Only a few hours ago. . . . 'He took my shoes off.' 'He massaged my feet.' 'He brought me a dry pair of pants.' 'The way he built that fire!' 'And the sacks of straw he filled'. 'Remember he made tea for us?' 'Ay, and do you remember him in Requena when we first arrived?'

We were not ashamed of our tears. Karl had given his life for his beliefs, and ours. We shall never forget him.

G. F. GREEN

A LOVE STORY

IT was autumn and the late evening when Ted Shearer, returning from the pit, walked into New Wilton. The leaves had begun to fall and a cold, damp wind blew in Pit Lane and in the streets now between the dirty brick rows. He was strong, and the caddy tapped his thigh at each metalled tread; a youth grimed from the pit, his blue eyes stricken white by the black, his hard curved mouth made red. He saw the shops already lit up, and hurried, for his mind held the pungent fields, tug of a leash at his hand, the nerved, sprung leap of a grey whippet. 'Non be late,' he thought '—lay odds on t'Streaker.' At Thompson's Fish and Chip corner he saw Elsie Warren, in fawn raincoat, the oilcloth bag half filled on her arm. He walked slower. She glanced, her smooth, fair, loose-curved hair, from the lit up window. He crossed the street to her.

'Ted,' she said.

Her small face, light eyes, her frail lips looked up.

'Goin' t' t'pictures?' he said.

Lights fell in the darkling town round him. It was chill. For him, she thought, she'd take death, weighted by a stone in the black pond among the tip banks. He was strong, and marred from the pit.

'I don't mind,' she said.

He smiled, as if he covered her slight body by his.

'Seven, then; on t'steps.'

'All right.'

She turned away quickly. He walked on, past her end house, the patch of garden at the back, up the steep, rough stoned hill to his home. It was dark in the kitchen; it smelled of the unlit, black-leaded grate, the long-varnished walls. The copper frame of his mother's photograph, with others, shewed on the mantelpiece. It was getting cold. The high, wood chair stood empty; the table not laid. He called 'Sarah, thi lout!' and flung the caddy and his coat to the horse-hair sofa. Sarah came, in the black cotton she wore as a hired girl, her torn slippers shuffled on the flagstones; peered from her grey face: her dry, black hair.

'Wot's up, Ted Shearer?'

He pulled off his flannel shirt.

'T'fire,' he said, 'an t'food? Tha'd muck thi own funeral.'

'Tha'll non be theer.'

'T'weddin then.'

'Nor theer.'

'Tha's envious.'

Bare to his waist, he laughed.

'Get weshed,' she said.

He went to the back kitchen. Sarah knelt and put a match to the grate. He swilled warm water on him, with his hand swirled the suds from the sink. He dried, and came back through the kitchen. Sat on his bed, he put on a dark blue coat and tied a grey scarf. He brushed back his short, curled hair. He went to the back and called his father, where the light sank on dug earth and the fences. His father, bent with age, stamped the soil from his boots and came in. He dragged the high, wood chair and sat at the table. The fire spluttered in the range. Sarah handed them tea, and they began to eat.

Ted walked in front of Elsie, her pale blue hat and rainproof, down the cinema aisle to the sevenpenny seats. On the benches in front the kids shouted, throwing and shoving at each other. The smoking had begun already. Canned music, indifferent over the restless capped heads, hit the stained Japanesey walls to, beyond the rail, the few shilling seats. Tawdry silk shades hung a simple light. Elsie saw it quietly, at rest in Ted's firm shoulders, arm and hand, next her. Lights sank. Ted waited for the dark, not bothering with her, and for the films to start. Dark fell, covering the drab-clothed crowd. Jittery light sprang on the screen, darkened to movement, and a voice **THIS IS THE GAUMONT BRITISH NEWS PRESENTING THE WORLD TO THE WORLD: cat-calls, whistles and some clapping** received it round the house. Items flickered at them; but when the cars roared making the kids yell and cheer, his arm crept on the seat behind her. She enjoyed the swift pageant of these other lives, while encircled here by his arm. It was like a lifetime. In the comic, which shrilled the laughter round them, his hand fell on her arm. But they waited for the big film. The lights raised, clearing in the haze the agitated crowd. He lifted his arm over her and lighted a cigarette. She knew him, rough and male, more than the rest; near her.

'Like it?' she said.

'—not bad.'

He smoked, paying no attention, while the lights dimmed on the decreasing chatter. He put his arm quietly round her. The screen flicked *Her Man . . . Certificate A*. He knew her fragility, his arm and his entire self pleased. It was smoky and hot. He began to sweat gently. The well dressed men bowed and performed their affairs

round a tall, white-silked lady, offering open cigarette cases. He saw it, mildly interested. Elsie, against his arm, watched, dreamy eyed. She stirred, making his wrist and hand tighten. He looked at her. His hand moved under her arm, held her as though his. He saw the screen, but with no interest. In the smoke and heat, his hand seemed to press on Streaker's taut bone. His wrist ached against the wood seat, so he glanced, not stirring his head. She dreamed at the picture. He didn't move, but sweated hotly; he recrossed his legs. He stared at the film, tried to trace it, with its women and men shifting in the big rooms, to its end. His wrist hurt him. Elsie lay closed in his hot, pulsed arm. The lights lifted, and the crowd climbed and scrambled on the seats, going with them to the street. Canned 'God Save The King' drove over them through the exits.

'So long,' he said.

She saw him, separate, one of the rest.

'Good night, Ted.'

She was going in the scattered crowd to her own street. Ted felt release, thought, 'She's a nice lass, Elsie.' His wrist throbbed in the chill dark. He thought of whippets leaping on damp grass. His steps rang freely in the street.

He went these days less with the dogs. Every Tuesday and Friday he took Elsie to the Lyceum. They came to know the stars almost as well as fat May in Rogers' sweet shop. Joey often came, when he and one or two pals sat in the fourpenny seats. Then he and Elsie walked home together. Nights were dark, but Ted still took the dogs, at times, to the cold fields.

Elsie knelt, in the afternoon, swabbed the linoleum of the kitchen floor. The fire burned hotly. At an ironing-board, where the floor dried, Mrs. Warren ironed a crushed-grape frock. The clock ticked from the wall.

'Ted Shearer's a nice lad.'

Mrs. Warren drew a wisp from her forehead.

'See him often?'

She pressed in neat thrusts the frilled collar.

'I mean he talks to you?'

'A bit,' Elsie said.

'The house belongs his dad, they say.'

Her bent hands reversed the frock. It was time, Elsie knew, for her to get him. She sluiced the water.

'You're not fit for service.'

She ironed the inside of Mrs. Fraser's frock. Elsie fluttered, like a bird, on the floor. She wanted Ted. She wanted his strength against

this frayed house. She swabbed round her knees. She needed him no more than to be near.

Joey, returning from school, swung his satchel. Ted saw him. They were by Thompson's chip shop.

'Na, Joey,' he said.

Joey stopped his face, wan, thin.

'Coming in?'

'Nay,' Ted said. 'Ah'm up t'fields, na.'

'Clark Gable's on Friday.'

His eyes tightened, as if to keep Ted to them.

'Ah'll go wi thi,' Ted laughed.

Ted went up the street; took the path, by a stile, to the fields. He smiled, seeing the men wait. He bent, played at the dogs, that sprang lithe from his hands, where men and the rough, autumn trees made his background.

Joey entered the kitchen, and dropped his satchel to a chair. Mrs. Warren folded the ironed frock and took it, on her arm, upstairs to pack.

'I saw Ted,' Joey said.

'When?'

'He's with his dogs.'

Elsie lifted a dish, fingers weak against him.

'He'll go on Friday.'

He was pale in his brief speech. They sat at the table as Mrs. Warren came, and began to eat. Elsie handed their food, but the men's fields weighed in her.

'Dad's working late,' she said.

They ate tiredly, the patterned walls and ticking clock of the kitchen, round them.

Now, as winter came, Ted sometimes ate at night in Thompson's chip shop. The streets lit the girls who, armed in twos and threes, still forced his stare to them. 'Ah doan't want t'town load,' he thought. He shoved the door and entered the hot, stinking room. He returned, in more deserted streets, his gait and his quick-turning eyes unpeased. Few were about. A stone he kicked, climbing his hill, echoed alone through alleys that already slept. He spat and shoved the door. Sarah washed plates in the dim back kitchen. At the fire his father bent, and filled his pipe. They looked, as he entered, silent. Ted flushed.

'Ah'm not drunk.'

Sarah jolted the plates on the rack.

'Ev it's courtin',' she said, 'it's best dun.'

‘Wetch thissen!’ he shouted. ‘They’ll non tek thee.’

He flung down his cap and went to the fire.

‘Er’s reight,’ his father said. ‘Ev tha wants t’marry un, marry un. Ev tha dusna, doan’t.’

‘Tha’s reight,’ Sarah said.

He flared with anger.

‘Get shut on it,’ he yelled, ‘an go.’

‘Ah’m goin’.’

Sarah put on a black hat, and got into her shapeless, black coat. She turned at the door.

‘Thee mend thi temper, Ted Shearer.’

She shut the door. Ted’s face was hot, as he stared round the fire-lit, familiar kitchen.

‘Ah’ll go,’ he said.

He picked his cap up, and mounted the stairs, chill, unlike the warm dark of the pit. He entered his narrow bedroom.

In these days, sleet drifted between the rows, separating them cold and dirty. It separated man and woman, so the thought in New Wilton was for couples, or more, the family in warm, well lit places. As Ted trudged from the pit, his clothes damp on him, he felt no hands to trammel him here in sleetin streets; and the need for it. At a corner he met Elsie. He stared at her, thinking, ‘Ah maun tek er, soon.’ Elsie saw the warmed, no gesture of his face: she thought, ‘Surely now—surely soon now,’ release into his strength. He spoke in drifting snow.

‘Ah’m goin’ t’ t’dance, Friday. Cummin’?’

Her voice spoke to him.

‘I don’t mind.’

‘Seven then.’

He gazed, thinking he smiled, but saw only the flecks in her frail, bared head. He turned home, through growing dusk, neither troubled nor quietened.

He came for her at seven. She was there, in a pink, frilly dress, with her father, mother and Joey. Her pink shoes were on the table. She moved, in the warm kitchen, with new, unrestricted ease, even grace, her arms and neck bare, with faint scent like a lady, the pale hair too done like a lady’s. Ted, in the genteeler home, felt ill at ease. He was heavy, in his black serge, his collar, and ill-tied tie. Mrs. Warren smiled to him.

‘Elsie’s a nice dancer.’

His cuffed hands felt stiff, his legs leaden.

‘So enjoy it,’ Mrs. Warren said.

He had no response. He waited on Elsie. She put on her rainproof over the frilled dress, slipped the shoes in a bag. Joey played at the table with a pencil. Ted, easier, took her arm. She was frail, as in the rained streets, and nearly his.

‘Bring her safe home,’ Mr. Warren said.

Ted grinned, as if he’d joked, thinking something else. He led her out. The snow had thawed. It was a chill, wet night as they walked to the Parish Hall.

The hall was warm, where music linked the girls in pink, yellow or blue frocks, to where youths stood round and decorations chained the roof’s rods. Ted disliked it. Elsie, fair in her pink frock, wore her pink shoes. He led her to the chairs, where dread flitted like a hand through him. He asked her to dance but his limbs lacked rhythm. His arm round her lissom ease, stopped it, hot, unable to release her. They sat out a dance or two, saying little. He joined in the Paul Jones, freed of her in the silly, heavy, male round. He didn’t mind the bad dancing of his random partners. He saw her flit pink through revolving couples, once dancing expertly. He ignored her; grinned, as his hands were tugged round, at Liza or fat May; merely waited. He met her, in the dispersing crowd, at truce, to the light decked supper-room.

But the music recalled them. He tried to dance, awkwardly, but they sat out often, Ted chatting to a friend. Little, amid the jazzing couples or warm powdery floor, lay between them. A boy asked Elsie to dance. He swung her out, perfectly dancing. Elsie’s small body, reluctant, grew afraid in pink frock, the facile gesture, losing him. She wished to dance ill, hated the clever arm, the flexed legs. Ted watched. He knew that for now she had fluttered from him. He chattered, wiping her from his slate, like a bad debt. The tune finishing, she joined him.

The lights at length dimmed, whilst shadowy music brushed the room. A few began to dance.

‘Let’s try,’ Elsie said, ‘it’s a waltz.’

‘Ah doan’t waltz,’ he said.

She flushed, a slight cough tore her throat. In the dusty, crowded hall, she thought, why wasn’t it usual Friday, the two with them all, at the Lyceum; but not here—oh not here.

‘Come,’ she said. ‘I’ll show you.’

They stood. She tried to guide him by her. But at her frock, her soft, refined touch, he resisted. A light bowed across them. He tried to break from it.

‘You’ll do,’ she said.

She held him, counting the beat. He hated her close, won body; wanted to end it. In the drifted light, they staggered, hot, disunited, amongst the rest to the dance's end. Lights rose on the destroyed music. They sat, and the rest of the dance, sat out, watching. For the gallop, Ted tore fat May round, as if they'd burn. Elsie clung to her partner, a cough tore her throat, her cheeks scalded. 'God Save The King,' like an outside rumour, quieted them. She went to get her clothes. Ted waited in the disordered crowd for her. She came in her raincoat, the pink shoes hung in the bag. A warmth, like a last spurt of flame, leapt in him. They went out to the porch. 'Ah'll tek thi, yet,' he thought. On all sides they went with friends, their footsteps home, through the night.

'S'long,' he said.

His back was turned, a darkening figure, up to his hill. Elsie went quickly, to prevent thought. But the boy she'd danced with, clung in her, loosening there Ted's own arms. 'What did I do?' she gasped. Tears struck a dark heat. 'He's gone,' beat through her head. She entered the kitchen, where Mrs. Warren waited. Clothes dried by the fire. It was twenty past twelve.

'A nice time?'

Elsie dropped to a chair, head in her arm, sobbing.

'What's this?' Mrs. Warren said. 'What is it?'

'He's gone,' she sobbed. 'I've lost him.'

Mrs. Warren moved from her round the table.

'No, you haven't,' she said. 'There's time. You'll get him yet. If you take care.'

But her words stunned, flooded love through her, his strength in the entire world. She sobbed, useless to him, losing him.

He came, and they visited the Lyceum, as winter gave way to spring. It was a restless time. Elsie, dusting and sweeping the house, was nervous, if her parents neared; her pallor increased. Mr. Warren grew tired, with summer. 'You ought to retire,' Mrs. Warren said. Elsie's heart knocked, helpless, as they sighed. Her housework, the endless wait could not be endured, she thought, were it not for Ted. Going to the pit, light shewed new buds by rotten fence or grey-black tips. He saw, thinking 'Ah maun wait.' Returning, the grass increased, he knew Elsie patient like a habit, sure like the stirred season. Some nights, the chestnut shooting its curled leaves, Joey came to the garden: 'I saw Ted,' he said, when Elsie knew he was with his dogs; or 'He wants you for a stroll,' he said. An expectant air lingered, like evening sun, in the house. She met him, as on a job, for whose free end, she longed.

They walked through fields, the high Wilton wood leftward, by a clough, where rusted siding, dog-rose and elder crowded, lay under sparse grown tips. She felt his strength by her. She wanted him there, the mere walk, for ever. They reached a field, quiet, in uncut hedges, like a huge room in a tale, its slope steep to the buffers, rank and wildly grown. The silent field compelled them. He took her in his arms.

‘Tha’s a good lass,’ he said.

His voice fell like a dark butterfly on her. His lips touched her cheek, as he held her gently.

‘Ah’m used t’thi,’ he said.

The quiet weighed against the words. He turned and led back on the path. A grief fluttered in her. The air, his voice, the fall of darkness had become memory. He walked ahead, watching the darkening. They came to the back rows of the town.

He didn’t see her for a time. Expectancy in her house hung like a pendulum weighted to strike. Mrs. Warren rarely spoke to her. She was pallid. Her hand, shifting Mr. Warren’s tea, held finality. She ceased troubling Joey to move his homework. She lived cautiously. Ted patted the dogs in the field. He talked loud, pressing his legs in lush grass. He made large bets, laughed oddly. His hands, from leash to whippet, were restless, as if time coursed through them. He watched the dogs slipped, sprinting grey on the field.

It had rained, as they walked by the clough, its green fresh, with air light and chill. He walked by her till they reached the field.

‘Sit thi,’ he said.

She lay, feeling no urgency. The damp struck, a sickly touch in her back and legs.

‘Theer’s t’fair’ he said.

She didn’t reply. Damp crept in her body; light widened the field no longer a shelter. He bent over her.

‘Shallus go?’

She heard the tone of finality in his voice, at last. She lay softly.

‘I’ll go.’

He put his hand on hers. They lay still, silent. A shiver from the cold earth ran in her limbs.

‘Tha’s cold,’ he said, ‘in thi thin frock.’

He raised her up. They went back on the path, strangely agreed. They parted at the street. But their backs, homeward, knew each the other, for good.

The night was clear at the fair. It was pitched on waste land, hard with pit bind, amid shale heaps that led to alleys and brick row ends. They met near, Elsie in print flowered frock. They entered the dark

noise, shot by lights. She glanced at the iron shatter, lips and face ashen, her cheeks aching; her body shivered at the male, frightening unreality. She was already ill. She knew their end was here, that exact gestures must be done. A chill sweat touched her brow. They pressed through the crowd. Ted needed to prove his strength, at every loud machine, before his easy triumph. He took a gun at a shooting booth. Elsie refused, clung, through his five shots, to the barrier. He shied at coco-nuts, threw darts, rolled money on the painted boards. They sat in the high ornate Peacocks, where rich music blared as they swung fast and faster round. She stared—his hand pressed on the brass rod—sickening. At the Hoop-la, she threw a ring, knocking down a vase. He laughed. He took her on the Whip, accelerating skilfully, so their car hurled at the corners. She dazed, as fever raced in her. He turned away, but she stopped.

‘Let’s get air,’ she said.

His back to the fair, he led her past a traction-engine, the caravans, to a bare space by an alley and high wall. A poster was lit dimly. He glanced once, then seized her in his arms. His need mounted, as he won her. Elsie’s life whitened—hand soiled on gold rod—fair’s cacophony—shoe on the hard pedal—disintegrated, too high. He drew her, noise drummed in his pulses. He pressed down his lips. Pain, exaggerated from her hurt mouth, split her head.

‘What shulds’t say—’ he breathed.

She heard nothing, but her tortured brain, like death.

‘I’m ill,’ she gasped.

He saw her chalky face, sweated; trembling. He turned, apart from her, by the brick wall.

‘We’d av cum then,’ he said.

He stared, where she shuddered.

‘It wor t’damp,’ he said.

They went by the wall till they reached the lit streets. They took her street, stopping at her house. She leant the door open.

‘Ah waited fer t’ munney,’ he said.

The door swung closed. He turned alone through the emptied streets, home. His father, at the back, mended a stool. He looked up.

‘Tha’s early,’ he said.

The kitchen darkened, smelling familiar. Ted heard the clock tick.

‘Elsie’s sick,’ he said. ‘Ah took ’er ’ome.’

His father grunted, wiring the stool. Ted went to the garden. He heard near, Sarah cleaning up in the back kitchen, but far away the finished noises at the fair. The night seemed like living’s weight, endless. A train called in distance. He turned his flushed face, where

tips, the stunted saplings lay in dark heat. His hands, dry, stale, held the fence: his fervour dead.

He didn't see her for two days. The third night he changed, and went to her house. Mrs. Warren let him in to the quiet room. Mr. Warren, grey by the window, read his paper. Joey left the table, staring thin faced. Mrs. Warren smoothed her dress.

'Doctor's been,' she said.

Ted waited.

'He says it's pneumonia.'

The paper rustled. Joey opened the stairs' door.

'You'll see her?'

He went with Mrs. Warren upstairs, and in to the bedroom. She lay, propped by pillows. A foetid, ill smell, feminine, hung in the room. Her face was pasty, eyes dulled, her skin yellowed to her neck. She coughed, as if hot rakes tore through her. She leant and spat phlegm to a bowl. He saw it, filthy, painful. Mrs. Warren crossed, opening the window. She put back the bowl. Her arms limp, she was emaciated, hands white, as if she'd dropped, kneading flour, too sick to finish. On a wicker table lay medical things. Steam poured from a kettle to buff walls. Mrs. Warren came to the bed. Consumed by the evil sickness, she hadn't noticed him.

'Ah maun go,' he said.

He left them, going downstairs, past Mr. Warren and Joey, to the street. The air was weighted. He stared at the burgeoned chestnut, thinking 'She might die.' He walked, contented, to his welcome hill. For a month, he didn't see her. Summer grew in slag heaps going to the pit, in fields, in the streets even. Time matured. He met Joey, asking of her. 'She's mending,' Joey said. He walked in warm air, like the country. At nights, he felt the dogs' flanks, heard their patter on the earth. He waited. Yet it seemed that summer was his for ever.

Coming home, he saw her, protected by rugs, under the tree. He no longer waited. He changed and came to her. The air was delicate, dry, in the small garden.

'Tha's better,' he said.

She lay wasted. The brick house, the few fenced plants struck, one with her, at his mind. His heart beat; he flushed.

'Ah'll go,' he said.

She stirred in her rugs. She heard him go, the gate shut, his hand on the latch. She closed her eyes, breathing slight. 'Ill . . .' struck her mind, 'ill . . . ill . . . ill . . .' Mrs. Warren's voice called in the garden.

'He's gone?'

The voice neared.

‘Time’s up, Elsie.’

She was helped back to the house. Joey, behind them, brought in the rugs and cushions. ‘Done,’ she heard, ‘it’s done at last.’

He passed, each day, her house. She knew the hour, his moving in the street. But as the first leaves fell, he saw her no more there. He laughed, then hurried home. The kitchen was dark, seemed empty, but Sarah dusted there. She saw him, grimed, live.

‘They’d luv thi—’

He drew her coarse hair; swung her to the glass.

‘Luk.’

She saw him grin. He kissed her hair.

‘Sarey!’ he laughed.

He ran from the kitchen. He changed and went out. In the fields, he walked slower, past high metallic woods. The path by the clough was damp for autumn. He sat on a stile. Mrs. Warren in the warm kitchen ironed a frock. Mr. Warren read. Elsie worried Joey with his homework; her gestures, busy from habit, ending a grief. He saw the fields darken; dropped his face to his hands. He sat for a time, a youth, unthinking, at the year’s fall. Then he walked to his known field.

LESLIE HALWARD

NO USE BLAMING HIM

ALAN whistled a few bars of a popular song as, standing bent-kneed before the mirror on his dressing-table, he flattened his collar and nipped and twisted the tight knot of his tie. He combed his hair carefully, accentuating the waves, and then, satisfied with his appearance, went downstairs.

Just as he reached the living-room a customer walked into the shop.

Mrs. Wheatley sighed 'Oh, dear' and made a showy effort to rise.
'All right, I'll serve,' said Alan.

'Large Gold Flake, please,' said the customer. 'And how're you getting along these days, young fellow?'

'Oh, not so dusty, Mr. Williams,' said Alan. 'Large Gold Flake did you say?'

'That's right.'

'Matches?'

'No, thanks. Got a job yet?'

Alan shook his head and pulled down the corners of his mouth.
'Not yet.'

'Ah, well,' said Mr. Williams, 'you'll drop into something nice and cushy one of these days, I expect. Good night.'

'Bloody old fool,' thought Alan. 'I hope I do,' he said. 'Good night.'

He opened the till, shut it again, slipped the shilling into his trousers pocket, took a packet of Players from the shelf and slipped that into his jacket pocket, then returned to the living-room. He put on his overcoat and hat.

'I'm off now,' he said to his mother. 'You'll be able to manage till Dad comes home, won't you?'

Mrs. Wheatley looked at the clock on the mantelshelf. Her husband would be home from work in less than half an hour. 'Yes, I shall be able to manage all right,' she said. 'Where are you off to to-night?'

Alan shrugged his shoulders.

'Have you got any money?' she asked.

'Well . . .' he said.

She got her purse from the cupboard, opened it, and gave him a two

shilling piece. 'It looks as if it's going to rain. You can't walk the streets in the rain. Take Freda to the pictures.'

'Thanks, Mom.' He put the two shilling piece in the other trousers pocket so that it would not clink against the shilling.

'Don't you ever let your father find out that I give you money,' she said. 'He's always complaining that I spend too much on house-keeping, and he keeps saying that the business isn't doing as well as it should. He was in an awful way about it again last night.' She heaved a swift sigh and sat down. 'We shan't be able to go on much longer like this. I don't know, I'm sure, what things are coming to. If you don't get a job soon. . . .'

Alan hung his head, sighed, bit his lower lip, said nothing.

'For two years now you haven't done a day's work,' his mother went on. 'For a year you haven't brought a penny into the house. Your father's ill with worry. He doesn't get much money at the works. If it wasn't for the shop we shouldn't be able to carry on at all. And now there's next to nothing in that. The takings get less every week.'

Alan did not raise his eyes. 'If I could do anything . . . ' he said. 'But what can I do? You've only got to look at the papers. . . .'

'I don't know what the world's coming to,' said Mrs. Wheatley.

They were both silent for some seconds.

Alan glanced at the clock. 'I shall have to go,' he said. 'Freda'll be waiting for me.'

She did not speak. He pecked at her proffered lips, then went out by the back way.

Freda had set out to meet him. 'Hello,' he said, cheerfully. He squeezed her arm above the elbow.

'Hello,' she said.

They began to walk. Before they had gone far Alan jerked up his head. 'Blast it!' he said.

'What's the matter?'

'It's started to rain! Of all the lousy weather!'

'It may not be much.'

'It'll rain like hell.'

'Perhaps we'd better go to the pictures.'

'Well . . . ' he said.

'I've got some money,' said Freda.

He looked up at the sky, baring his teeth. 'It'll rain like hell,' he said again. 'We shall get drowned if we stay out in it.'

'We'll go to the pictures,' said Freda.

He sighed and looked away from her.

‘What’s the matter?’ she asked.

‘You know very well what’s the matter,’ he snapped. ‘Do you think I *like* your paying every time we go anywhere?’

‘It doesn’t worry *me*,’ said Freda. ‘I don’t see why it should worry *you*.’

‘It’s easy enough to say that.’

‘Well, you can’t help it, can you? It isn’t *your* fault, is it?’

‘I don’t know. Some people seem to think so.’

‘What do you mean, Alan?’

‘Mother was on to me just before I came out, telling me how long it was since I took any money into the house. As if I didn’t know that!’ He paused, then said in a low voice, ‘I sometimes think the best thing I could do is clear out.’

‘You wouldn’t do that, Alan,’ she said. ‘Where would you go? What would you do?’

‘I don’t know,’ he said. ‘But one thing’s certain. Wherever I went I shouldn’t be known. Here, where *everybody* knows me, it’s nothing but, “Have you got a job yet?” “Pity you can’t get a job.” Job, job, job! I’m sick of the sound of the word. There was a bloody fool in the shop to-night told me I should drop into a nice cushy job one of these fine days. Thought himself smart. He ought to have a packet of it himself.’

‘But, Alan, people like that aren’t worth taking any notice of.’

‘I know all about that. But how can you help taking notice of them when you hear nothing else but that sort of thing? And the ones that do all the smart talking very likely never lost a day’s work in their lives. That’s what gets up your back. They’re that damned smug and self-satisfied . . . !’

‘It’s coming on to rain faster,’ Freda interrupted. ‘We’d better get into the pictures. Which shall we go to?’

He had looked up a programme early in the evening. James Cagney was featured in the film showing at *The Odeon*. Cagney was Alan’s favourite film actor. Freda loathed him.

‘Let’s go to *The Odeon* shall we?’ he suggested.

‘What’s on there?’

‘I just forget. But it’s a bit the nearest from here, isn’t it?’

‘There’s not much in it. Still, we’ll go to *The Odeon* if you like.’

They set off. Just before they reached the cinema she slipped one and sixpence into his hand.

When they got to the cinema she looked at the framed stills and uttered an exclamation of disgust.

'James Cagney! I don't want to sit looking at *him*!'

'Well,' said Alan, looking at the rain, now falling heavily, 'it's a good step from here to *The Windsor*. We should be soaked by the time we got there.'

'Oh, damn!' said Freda. 'I suppose we shall have to go in.'

'I'm sorry,' said Alan. 'I don't seem to be able to do anything right.'

'It isn't *your* fault,' said Freda. She smiled at him. 'Come on, don't be miserable. I don't mind all that much. It might be quite a good picture.'

Alan thoroughly enjoyed the film, which was very exciting, and in the cinema became quite cheerful again. In the darkness he held Freda's hand and several times pressed her knee.

It was still raining when they came out.

'We can't stay out in this,' said Alan.

'We'll go home,' said Freda.

'Who'll be there?'

'Only Mother and Dad.'

Mr. and Mrs. Johnson were in the living-room, seated one on either side of a roaring fire. Mrs. Johnson was darning some socks and her husband had obviously been startled out of a nap by the couple's entrance; he yawned loudly and stretched himself.

'What a dreadful night it is!' said Mrs. Johnson.

'Isn't it?' said Alan. 'Hello, Mr. Johnson. Did we disturb you?'

'Just having forty winks,' mumbled Mr. Johnson, breaking another yawn.

'I should light the gas-fire if you want to go into the front room,' said Mrs. Johnson.

'I'll go and light it now,' said Alan.

He went and lit the gas-fire, leaving it on full, then came back into the living-room and took off his hat and coat. He and Freda sat down on the couch.

'I suppose you haven't been lucky enough to hear of a job since we saw you last,' Mrs. Johnson said, after a time.

'No, I haven't, more's the pity,' Alan said, as patiently as if it were the first time he had been asked the question.

Mrs. Johnson clicked her tongue against the roof of her mouth. 'Your luck seems to have run out altogether. You haven't had much lately, have you?'

'No,' he said. 'Still . . . keep smiling.'

'There don't seem to me to be much to keep smiling about,' said Mrs. Johnson, 'when you're spending the best years of your life idling your time . . . waiting. . . . You ought to be married and settled down by now.'

Alan said nothing. To his great relief, Freda said, 'I should think the chill's off the front room by this time.'

They got up and went into the other room and closed the door. Freda drew the curtains across the window. They pulled the worn settee up to the hearth and sat in the firelight. Alan leaned forward and held his palms to the heat. Then he clasped his hands together, his forearms resting on his thighs, and bowed his head and stared at the fender.

After they had sat in silence for some minutes Freda said, 'What are you thinking about, Alan?'

He shrugged his shoulders.

'You're not fretting about what your mother said, are you?'

He said nothing.

'She wasn't blaming you,' said Freda. 'She knows it isn't your fault. She's worried, that's all, wondering how much longer it's going on. After all, she's your mother. It's only natural.'

'I suppose it is,' he said. 'But it hurts all the same. I don't care about being reminded that I'm nothing but a . . . a millstone round their necks.' He covered his face with his hands. 'My God,' he said, 'I know that without being told.'

'Don't talk like that, Alan,' Freda said. 'Things won't always be like this. You'll get a job, and then—'

'A job!' He gave a short laugh. 'What a chance! Every week the papers tell you that unemployment figures are going up. Every other man in the town is out of work. A job!' He laughed again.

She laid her hand on his arm. 'Alan! This isn't like you!'

'I'm sorry,' he said. 'But sometimes . . .' He slid his hand to her knee, pressed it. 'If only other people were like you,' he said. 'You're grand. You make things so much easier for me. If it weren't for you I don't think I should be able to carry on.'

'I love you, Alan,' she said.

She lifted her head and he kissed her. He drew her back so that they half-lay on the settee. His one hand covered her breast. He manoeuvred her until she lay full length, then lay beside her. Trembling, he kissed her mouth, her throat. She stretched herself, sighed, then lay still, submissive.

'Alan,' she whispered.

He did not speak.

'Alan,' she said, and raised herself carefully and looked at him. His face was turned towards the fire. His eyes were closed. He was sleeping. She got off the settee carefully, not disturbing him, and sat on the hearthrug at his feet.

He grunted, stretched himself. 'Must have dropped off. What time is it?'

She looked at her watch. 'Nearly half-past ten. Do you want any supper?'

He reared himself. 'Drink of coffee or something. Nothing much.' He got to his feet, sucked in his breath. 'Gosh, I'm stiff!' He rubbed his eyes, ran a pocket comb through his hair. 'Shall I turn out the fire?'

'Please.'

He turned out the fire and followed her into the living room. Mr. Johnson had gone to bed and Mrs. Johnson was about to go. 'Don't be long,' she said to Freda. 'Good night, both.'

'Good night,' they said.

Freda made two cups of coffee and set them on the table. 'What are you going to have to eat?' she asked Alan.

'Oh, nothing much.'

'There's half a pork pie in the pantry. Would you like a piece of that?'

'Well, just a small piece.'

She got out the pork pie. 'Help yourself,' she said.

He cut himself a good sized piece from the pie, sat down at the table, and began to eat. 'What about you?' he asked, in a moment or two, looking up.

'Just a drink for me,' said Freda.

'I'd love a drop more coffee, if it isn't too much trouble,' he said.

'It's no trouble at all.' She got up and made another cup of coffee.

'I'm sorry I was such rotten company to-night,' he said.

She did not say anything.

'I was a bit depressed,' he said. 'Everybody seemed to be on to me.' He smiled. 'But I feel better now.'

'That's all that matters,' said Freda.

He studied her face. 'Tired?'

She nodded. 'A bit.'

'I wish you didn't have to stick that lousy job.'

'I don't mind it all that much.'

'You know you hate it.'

'I don't think about it any more than I can help. Anyway, the money's good.'

He had no reply to that.

He finished his coffee. 'Well, I'm off. You'll be in bed by eleven,' he said.

He put on his hat and coat and she went with him to the front door. He opened the door and looked out. 'It's stopped raining. The stars are shining,' he said.

'Alan,' she said.

'Yes?'

'Can you manage till Friday? I can't let you have any money to-night. I've got to pay mother—'

'I'll manage,' he said quickly, interrupting her. He patted her arm. 'I'll manage all right, you needn't worry about that. What I can't have I shall have to do without, that's all.'

'On Friday—'

'That's all right,' he assured her. 'Don't you worry yourself about me.'

'But I can't help worrying about you. I know how awful it must be for a man to have to go about without a penny in his pocket.'

He took her in his arms. 'You're a grand girl, Freda,' he said. 'But you must get to bed now. You'll never get up in the morning. It's all right for me. I can have another half hour if I want it. Not that I wouldn't ten times rather turn out early and be on the job. I only wish I had the chance.'

'You'll get your chance,' she said.

They kissed once and a moment later he heard her bolting the door.

It was half-past eleven when he arrived home. The back door key was on the lavatory window ledge and the gas was turned low in the living-room, which meant that his parents were in bed. He let himself in, making no noise, and turned up the gas. He went to the foot of the stairs and listened. No sound. His parents were asleep. He cautiously opened the cupboard and from the back lifted out a half-full bottle of whisky. His mother drank a drop of whisky every night as a medicine. He poured some into a tumbler and added a spot of hot water from the kettle on the hob. He returned the bottle and closed the cupboard door again. She would not miss that drop—had never missed it yet, anyway. He sat down at the table, sipped the whisky, and looked round for something to read. The evening paper lay on one corner of the table. It had not been opened. The old couple must have been kept on the run to-night. Perhaps the old

man wouldn't moan so much if they'd done a bit of trade. He picked up the paper and turned back the first page. Out of habit he glanced at the *Situations Vacant* column.

All at once his eyes grew wide and his mouth fell open. He blinked, swallowed noisily, doubled back the paper and peered closely to make sure that he had read aright. He let the paper fall to his knees and gazed straight in front of him. Then he picked it up and once more read the advertisement.

Lewis Brothers, the firm he had worked for until two years ago, were advertising for a clerk to do the very job at which he had been employed! The job was as good as his. If he got there first thing in the morning, as soon as they opened, and sent in his name, they would not bother to see anybody else.

In his excitement he got to his feet and began to pace up and down the room. He kept stopping first to have a sip of whisky and then to re-read the advertisement. Gosh! A job! After two years! He hadn't got it yet, of course, but it was almost a certainty. He was trembling slightly and his brow and upper lip were moist with perspiration.

Then, as if he had heard a startling sound, he stood still, his head cocked on one side. A cunning look came to his eyes and he ran the tip of his tongue over his lips. He sat down, picked up the paper stared at it, tapped the back of his hand with it.

Then, quickly, he tore out the half-column containing the advertisement, rolled it into a spill, and lit a cigarette with it. He took the paper, into the scullery and put it half-way down a pile of others that were to be burnt.

He finished the whisky, swilled out the glass, dried it, and put it back in the cupboard.

A few minutes later he was in bed.

Just as he was about to fall asleep a sudden thought startled him into complete wakefulness. Some bloody fool who knew them and couldn't mind her own business—it would sure to be an old woman—was bound to come into the shop and ask his mother or his father if they had seen the advertisement!

Well, they hadn't. And, of course, neither had he. And by the time they all knew about it, it would be too late to do anything.

He clouted the pillow, burrowed his head into its softness, curled himself into a ball, and lay still.

ANDRÉ CHAMSON

TABUSSE AND THE POWERS

Translated from the French by John Rodker.

‘Hi, Tabusse,’ Pagès had cried after him, ‘aren’t you staying to see our Deputy?’

Tabusse was off to the woods, his axe against his ear. It was a morning of shut flowers and drenched herbage, in early Spring.

‘The Deputy,’ said Tabusse, ‘let him chase himself. The devil he matters to me!’

Pagès was standing outside Nancy’s grocery shop. Ten yards further on, by the fountain, Dupont was rolling a cigarette, trying to sift out the tiny twigs bristling in his tobacco in the depths of his pouch.

‘Hi, Tabusse,’ Dupont said, ‘aren’t you staying with the rest of us?’

‘Devil take you,’ said Tabusse, ‘I don’t need anybody’s help.’

Milette came down the street, avoiding the gutter that was spouting melted snow. He straddled the stream with his legs, and shaking his head, said to Tabusse:

‘Hi, Tabusse, you’re not going off without waiting?’

‘You annoy me,’ said Tabusse, ‘you only think of those who hold all the tricks.’

Reaching the foot of the rise, he began whistling to himself. Winter had played havoc with Nisolle’s veranda. ‘That’ll make a few days’ work,’ Tabusse thought to himself.

The old dame Pierrelle was behind her door. She heard the whistling, poked her head into the light, blinked, and saw Tabusse.

‘Tabusse,’ she said, ‘this isn’t a day to be going off on your own.’

Tabusse made no reply, but from deep inside him, a word rose which all but found expression. With great strides he mounted the rise, playing with his axe, and feeling it cool against his cheek. Half-way he turned, and leant down towards l’Espérou, as though at the brink of a well, to see what it was that was moving among the maze of houses. A small black crowd could be seen advancing along the road: there were children running with dogs, and the sun seemed never to move away from the women’s Sunday aprons.

And again Tabusse found that word, deep in his throat, and again

he went on deeper into the woods. It was a free open morning without a cloud in the sky. Under the trees it was just as it should be for the time of the year: an unfolding of the universe, a joyful tenseness, a surging of grasses, of buds, and living waters. From the road to the plantation-nursery, Tabusse caught sight of the forest guard hurrying with great strides along by the telephone wires. He shouted to him and gesticulated, making signs for him to come. But the guard stretched out his arm three times towards the village, and without paying any further attention to Tabusse, went on striding away. Never had the forest seemed more solitary. Tabusse looked for birds in the branches, but could not see any. It seemed to him as though the world had suddenly emptied itself of every living object. Only a white butterfly in the midst of the footpath, fluttered about beneath the trees, darted into the sunlight, then back to the shadow, and yet again went back as though seeking the warm air: like a scrap of paper dancing and fluttering in the wind.

Tabusse turned back to the village.

At eleven-thirty, he passed in front of the Inn. All the men were there, having a drink with the Deputy, while the women, a few steps off, gossiped among themselves with many a sidelong glance.

‘There he is, though,’ said the men. ‘It’s Tabusse.’

The Deputy called out to him.

‘Good day, Tabusse.’

Pagès offered him a chair. They made him sit at the table, with a glass of anis in front of him. Everyone was laughing, and each and everyone seemed to have caught the spirit of the morning.

‘So,’ said the Deputy, ‘you didn’t want to see me?’

‘Good,’ said Tabusse. ‘There’s nothing but evil tongues round here. Everything’s repeated, and they twist it how they will. I voted for you. We’re of the same mind in politics. But I haven’t broken my leg. Why should I come round bothering you?’

‘If it’s bothering folk to take a drink with them?’

‘Otherwise,’ said a voice, ‘they’ll propose some other roadsman.’

‘Yes,’ said the Deputy, ‘five kilometers of roads have been taken back from the department. We’ve got to have a roadsman for them. He can be taken from you, or some other village. We’ll settle it all in the next few days.’

‘As to the fountain,’ said Pagès, ‘there’s always exactly the same trouble. Winter, the pipes burst like a bottle! Spring, we’ve water all over the shop. It needs re-doing from top to bottom.’

The smell of the anis was like a rope knitting the attention of all

those sitting about the table. All at that moment were thinking the same thoughts: but Tabusse, lying slightly backwards in his chair, seemed to be dreaming.

‘On the other hand,’ said Dupont, ‘our first thought should be for the schools.’

‘It doesn’t worry me, because my children have all left now. But it’s a disgrace to all of us. You’d think we were back in the days when we had kings, as we find it put down in the books.’

‘That’s so,’ said Pagès, ‘and yet we’re satisfied with the schoolmaster. He shouts at us when the children miss their lessons. He’s got all sorts of odds and ends on the walls, and pictures giving the full explanations. He can make the music go with a swing when it comes to teaching the children music. That man will show you how to read in three months. I’m fast becoming a donkey beside my children.’

‘You’ve how many children at school?’

‘Fourteen in bad weather, eighteen when it’s good . . . because of the old Huts. It’s five kilometers they have to go. In winter, it’s the devil’s own business, but the bigger ones use skis, and that’s as good as a motor to them.’

Three fingers of anis had just been poured into each of the glasses. Milette let a trickle of water drop into his glass, and the opalescent liquid veered from tint to tint like a cloud driving before the wind. Then, as noon struck, everyone hurriedly drank.

‘As to the roadsman,’ said Tabusse, ‘it’s you people who do the proposing?’

‘I always do my utmost,’ said the Deputy, making a sign to the servant not to take the money that Pagès was holding out to her.

‘We’ll break off for a bite,’ he added. ‘This afternoon, the Southern Electric’s engineers should be coming up. I’ll go along with them, to see whether the current can’t be brought up here, without it costing the shirt off your backs. All the same, you’d get the money back. I’m staying here overnight. There’ll be plenty of time to talk things over.’

‘Current,’ said a voice, ‘we’ll find our outhouses going up in flames.’

‘Stay as you like,’ said Pagès. ‘I’ll have it put into mine, even if you find that oil suits you better. . . . Shall we go now?’

The Deputy was eating at Pagès’s house. Everyone got up, Tabusse last. He took Pagès by the sleeve, and drew him aside a little.

‘What does he earn, a roadsman?’

‘Somewhere around eight thousand,’ said Pagès, ‘and they’re always getting rises from the council. It isn’t a bad job.’

Tabusse was about to say something more, but Pagès broke away

and caught up with the group mounting the street, leaving him standing.

At two, the engineers drove up in a car. The whole village was awaiting them at the Inn, while taking their coffee.

‘The snow will snap the wires,’ said some. ‘It will be just like the telephone. Out of action four months in the year.’

‘It would need lines as thick as my leg, and the thicker they were, the heavier they would be, and the heavier they were, the faster they would snap.’

There were two camps. For and against the current. Argument waxed high. Examples of other villages were cited, in which electricity had only recently been installed. Tabusse alone took no part in the discussion. He seemed to be gazing at the engineers as they hastily drank their coffee, with a swift glance at their watches. Now and then his head would plunge suddenly forwards like a man falling asleep, who, as he relaxes, awakes again.

Pagès said: ‘We’ll go down now. There’s no need to waste these gentlemen’s time. I’ll come too, if you like, in view of the turns and twists.’

The engineers got up, the Deputy likewise, and all arranged themselves in two parallel lines in order to take leave of each other: the village on one side, and the powers on the other. And since, during the head-shaking, there was a general silence:

‘About that application,’ said Tabusse, ‘might one ask where you have to make it?’

‘The current isn’t here yet,’ said one of the engineers, buckling his leather jacket. ‘You’ve plenty of time yet.’

‘The current?’ said Tabusse, tugging his hair.

‘What application, then?’ said the Deputy.

‘For roadsman,’ said Tabusse.

No one could make head or tail of it. The engineers looked at each other. The Deputy shrugged his shoulders, and, stepping cautiously, began to descend the road.

‘Devil take it,’ said Pagès, ‘who’s talking about a roadsman. We’re dealing with current just now.’

Pagès, the engineers, and the Deputy moved down towards the pass, and began mounting the slopes that dominate the valley. The village scattered like a host of larks. Everyone was trying to catch up the lost time. Tabusse, left alone, took to the road, and edging off to the ridge, vanished into the trees just as he came to the crest. Rounding the little promontory that dominates the pass, he saw the group

proceeding downwards, over the slopes, with lengthy pauses and much gesticulation. With his eyes, he followed it till it reached the depths of the valley. Frequently he was forced to change his position on the crest, and would then leap over the rocks. Finally he saw the four men stand stationary: now they were merely so many black dots. Nevertheless, they remained clearly visible on the plateau marking the end of the valley. They stayed there some time, looking, it seemed to him, towards the gap through which the river escaped. At last, they grouped themselves together again, went on a bit, then placing themselves in line, began to climb back up the slopes. As though trailing a boar, Tabusse leaned over the abyss, gauging what direction they would take and their way over the rockfalls. Then stretching upright, he began descending full tilt to meet them.

Now he had lost sight of the small group, but he ran on through the beech trees though he saw nothing. Nevertheless so well had he calculated his progress, that he met them at the third twist, just as they were issuing on to the high road.

'So you've finished, eh?' said Tabusse to the Deputy. 'I used to work down there on the tree-felling. You're taking the pull up easy, eh? The road's a lot better than climbing the rocks. You've no idea the amount of work it takes, and man's work at that, to keep this road in condition. . . . You need good roadsmen in these parts.'

The Deputy seemed not to be listening. He was breathing hard, swallowing his spittle, and now he had pushed back his hat and unbuttoned his waistcoat. Tabusse walked by his side, careful not to outpace him, stretching out his neck and twisting his head in order to see him better. Twenty meters behind, Pages and the engineers followed.

The Deputy was thinking. . . . A million and a half francs in shares of five hundred: it's a hell of a sum to get hold of. Why on earth did I get myself mixed up in this mess. It looks as if we'll have to make them happy in spite of themselves.

'Because,' Tabusse went on, 'it's just as I tell you. Rocks, earth, snow, water when it's melting, thunderstorms and gales—you've got to have sound men for the job. . . . You won't find so many who'd make good roadsmen. It isn't that I'm hankering after the job, but one ought to do what one can!'

'Hell,' said the Deputy suddenly, 'if you think there's any lack of candidates? If you want the job, you've only to say so, but don't think you're taking it on for me.'

The second group had now come up to them.

'Don't imagine,' said one of the engineers, 'that such very strong

pylons would be necessary. In these mountains, it's better to have them smaller and closer. After all, it only means a couple of kilometers of lines from the bottom of the valley.'

'It's because of the snow,' said Pagès. 'It'll load your lines like a lorry. I know, of course, that round here, the drop would clear them, but even so!'

Tabusse walked on in silence, with Pagès furtively watching him. Then, as they were pressed together for an instant, where the path turned, he said in his ear:

'What the hell are you doing here?'

Tabusse said nothing and moved closer to the Deputy, but the latter was deep in conversation with the engineers. Below 'the little field' they left the road, and getting into Indian file, began straggling up the short cut, with Tabusse closing the line. At the pass, he made another attempt to get near the Deputy, but Pagès got in between, and he was forced to fall back once more.

Once they were back in the village, the little crowd soon gathered again. The engineers were anxious to start back immediately, but they were forced to stay a few more minutes.

'You're going to bring the electricity, and want to go off without taking a drink with us,' said the men. 'What next!'

Tabusse was morose. At times, in the midst of the general hubbub, he opened his mouth like a gasping fish and leant forward, but then, sucked under by the babble of voices, the floods of word and laughter, sank back again. Bottles were brought: they clinked glasses.

'To the electricity,' the young people cried.

Night came quickly. 'We'll smash ourselves up on your roads,' the engineers were saying.

The motor started up, roared dully in front of the door.

'Now as regards the road . . .' Tabusse was trying to say, as though in confidence, to the engineers.

'Now, now, let them get started,' said the Deputy. 'It's best they should be out of the mountains before night.'

In front of the Inn a crowd jostled, as though in rhythm with the motor which was roaring in bursts. Arms rose.

'What a place,' said the engineers, raising their overcoat collars against the wind of their speed.

'If the road was too bad,' said Tabusse, watching the car disappear, 'they'd soon be over a precipice.'

The engineers gone, a sort of mysterious embarrassment paralysed all conversation. The Deputy was eating again at Pagès's house in the company of friends. Not everyone, however, had been invited, and

faced by this silence, those who felt themselves superfluous hastened to take leave, with a hundred justifications to spare their pride.

‘Good,’ Dupont had said, . . . ‘I’m forgetting my beasts . . . well, Good night everybody.’

Soon, only the guests were left, and Tabusse who was not one of them.

‘In God’s name,’ said Pagès to Milette, ‘he’s going to do what he did the night of the fougasse. Smash everything and lay out everybody. All the same we can’t take him home with us.’

Tabusse did not seem at all inclined to go. He had planted himself by the stove, and with his eyes glued to the Deputy’s shoes, was counting the eyelets from every angle. One, two, three, four, five. Two, four, six, eight, ten. Behind him, Pagès was signalling to the rest. Everyone seemed robbed of sight and hearing, and yet not a motion was lost. Finally, at a sign from Pagès, they rose. In the street they split into tiny groups. As they passed in front of the fountain, to the left of which lay Tabusse’s house, Pagès suddenly stretched out his hand.

‘Well, good night,’ he said.

Then hurried, full speed, after the group that had gone on ahead.

‘Devil take it,’ he said in an undertone. ‘I’m sure he’s following us. Walk quickly. I thought he’d have an attack.’

But Tabusse had remained motionless under the insult.

‘Swine,’ he said. ‘This morning they were calling me, and to-night they kick me into the street. I’ll smash the lot of them.’

Pagès and the rest, walking swiftly, cautiously turned their heads.

‘He’s not following,’ said Milette.

‘Well, wait till he’s got a few drinks in him,’ said Pagès calmly. ‘We’re safe for a couple of hours.’

At the head of the steps, the women were shouting, holding the lamps well out to shield them from the wind.

‘You’ve taken your time! Everything’s burnt. You could have said it all while you were eating. No ceremony. Come quickly!’

‘Tabusse is going to smash all the crockery,’ Pagès said calmly to his wife. ‘We’ve earnt our dinner to-day, all right.’

All the same Tabusse was soon forgotten.

Tabusse was eating alone, as on the night of the fougasse.

‘Stronger than you,’ he said, squashing a morsel of soft cheese into the holes in his bread. ‘Stronger than everyone. You hang round him because of the job, and you want to anger me to ruin my chances. But see, I just smile at it all. Just another glass to make me still happier.

Now I feel like a bridegroom. I've won the boss's daughter, ladies and gentlemen, and the job too.'

He drank two litres of local wine, sipping it slowly, and with much good grace towards himself. Towards half past nine he was as gay as a bird at sunrise, with scarlet cheeks and tousled hair: he felt full of audacity.

Surefooted as a goat, he skipped up to Pagès's house. The door had been thrown open because of the heat and smoke. The light fell in a beam on the steps. At the first step, Tabusse gave a long piercing whistle.

Everyone at the table, jumped.

'There he is,' said Pagès. 'Our fun's over.'

'I'm disturbing you perhaps?' said Tabusse framed in the doorway. 'Oho! what a good time you're having. Good evening to each and all. You're raising row enough to collect the village. You're not on fire by chance?'

'Come in,' said Pagès, 'come and take a drink with us.'

'A kick on the shins,' said old Pat, 'a jab with the knee in the parts. Bravely, my lads, don't be afraid. We'll teach you the way it's done.'

'Quiet!' said Pagès, 'shut your trap. He doesn't look as if he's angry. Don't anger him.' Then in the voice of a diplomat. 'It was a good idea to come: take this chair.'

Tabusse went and sat down by the side of the Deputy. They all thought he was furious, but he smiled with his hat over his ear.

'Don't put yourselves out, as it were.'

Something to drink was poured out for him. He was given a plate of whipped cream, and a tin box full of biscuits was pushed along within reach.

'They're mixed,' said Pagès's wife, in a voice that trembled.

He laid his hand on the back of the Deputy's chair, opened the neck of his shirt, and shutting his eyes, drank a mouthful.

'He's always got room,' said Pagès. 'With him it's a pleasure. He's always ready to eat, no matter when!'

Old Pat alone was discontented. 'B... and blast...' he was muttering in his teeth, 'if it was only me, his goose would soon be cooked.' He made an attempt to turn the talk on to politics.

Tabusse ate and drank and said nothing.

'Open your eyes,' said Old Pat. 'There are people about who would sell the Republic.'

But no one listened to him. Everyone was keeping a watch on Tabusse, wondering why he had not yet upset the table, overturned the lamp and smashed the crockery.

The Deputy dozed with half an eye, watching the smoke of the small cigar at which he was puffing.

‘We ought to go carefully into this matter,’ at last said Tabusse.

‘What matter?’ asked Pagès.

‘The roadsman,’ Tabusse answered. ‘The thing is to know who’d do it best?’

‘My cousin at the Huts would be glad of the job,’ said Pagès.

‘Hi, there,’ cried Tabusse, ‘he doesn’t even live on the road. We must have somebody absolutely reliable, and my house is in front of the very first milestone.’

‘That’s true,’ said Pagès and Milette.

‘You’d make a first-rate roadsman.’

With his open eye, the Deputy now seemed to be watching the words with a smile, as they flew round the table.

‘Mister Deputy,’ Tabusse said at last, ‘told me he would do all he could for me.

‘Fine,’ said Pagès, ‘no one better could be found!'

‘All for Tabusse,’ added Milette.

Tabusse had slid further and further back. His open shirt revealed the crisp fair hair on his chest. He felt rosy and fresh, and kindly disposed to them all.

Only old Pat still looked crossly at him. Tabusse picked up his glass, and, shutting one eye and taking old Pat as his mark, with a fleck of froth to sight him:

‘To the old 38th,’ he cried.

Old Pat leapt to his feet, standing to attention.

‘To Tabusse.’

‘To our roadsman,’ cried the whole room.

The Deputy awoke: ‘You move pretty fast!'

‘Do we?’ said Tabusse.

‘Come,’ said Pagès, ‘we’re all in favour. Do this for all our sakes.’

‘If his category’s all right, I’m agreeable. We have to find out at the Prefecture.

‘The service he’s seen!’ said old Pat. ‘The medals he’s got!'

More drink was poured out for Tabusse.

The night seemed endless. Tabusse could not get off to sleep. At home, lying on his face on the mattress, he revelled in his new ambitions. ‘Not a halfpenny less, and eight thousand francs the more. I’ve earned my day without knowing it.’

Till the moon set, towards three in the morning, he felt joyful.

But when night shut down like a door, he wanted to sleep, but could not stay comfortable a moment.

‘That’s what it is not to be married,’ he told himself, ‘a woman’s of use at least in helping to get one sleepy.’

By the time the false-dawn had come, he was mad with rage and kicking furiously at the bedclothes. Now he could hear doors being opened. Dupont was leading his cattle out. Merely by the noise, Tabusse could tell what everyone would be doing that day. A woman at the fountain was carting full pitchers away.

‘I’m getting as lazy as a clerk,’ he told himself.

He was still in bed when he heard the Deputy’s car starting up outside the Inn. With one bound he was out, hurrying across the square, buttoning his flies and buckling his belt.

He saw Pagès, bending towards the Deputy, as though earnestly requesting something. He felt he was being betrayed.

Anger made him hasten, yet he admonished himself in secret, as it were: ‘Smilingly now . . .’

‘Why, here he comes,’ said Pagès.

‘Well, have a good journey,’ said Tabusse, ‘don’t forget me for the job.’

‘All right, but I can’t promise more than I’ll do my very best.’

Pagès’s face wore a sly, tranquil smile that seemed to bode no good to him. Tabusse searched for something fresh to say.

‘All right,’ he repeated, ‘it’ll do as it is.’

The car drove off between them, leaving them facing each other.

‘There, you’re nominated,’ said Pagès, ‘however it turns out, we’ve all done our best.’

‘Ah,’ cried Milette, from his doorstep, ‘now you’re a roadsman.’

It was a morning even brighter than yesterday’s. Lambert with ironical incalculable light Tabusse took his axe and started for the forest. At the fountain, Dupont said to him:

‘You’ve been promoted during the night.’

‘Are you taking a rise out of me?’ answered Tabusse.

The old dame Pierrelotte was in front of her door. She waited until Tabusse came up to her.

‘So you’ve got a job now,’ she shouted.

Tabusse walked quickly. He was no longer in the humour for talking. A crowd gathered behind him, laughing and shouting. Soon he was seen on the brow of the hill, growing larger, then dwindling, as though revolving with the earth. He seemed to fall into the forest, and everyone went back to his own affairs.

The air was so fresh that even though there was no wind, it penetrated into the very depths of one's lungs. It calmed the fever of the eyes, the mouth, and even over the hands it glided like purest water.

The morning was like yesterday's. The grass was white with dew, the flowers shut tight, and in the sunlight, a sparkle of drops dusted the earth as in those rocky gulleys through which the cascades leap.

At five to twelve, all the village gathered in front of Pagès's house to meet the postman, who had just come up with the letters, when Tabusse surged forth from the hill brow, and in a few strides stood in the square.

'Maria,' he shouted, 'come and send a telegram for me.'

'It's just on closing time,' said Maria, 'you know I have to send them all by phone. They're shut from twelve till two. They won't want to take it at the last minute.'

'Hell!' cried Tabusse. 'Don't waste time. I've only just got here. Does one have to write it? No? I don't know about these things. It's the first I've ever sent. Well, I'll say it to you.'

Everybody present began crowding round the telephone box.

Maria turned the handle and pressed the receiver down.

Tabusse, planted in front of her, gazed at the lines with an air of authority.

'Hullo,' said Maria, 'an urgent telegram. . . . No! it hasn't struck yet.'

'It's for the Deputy,' said Tabusse. 'I want him to get it before he leaves. He should be eating at the hotel.'

'For the Deputy,' said Maria, 'he must be at the hotel . . . just arrived . . . are you ready?'

She looked at Tabusse. Tabusse was finding the right words. With his left hand he seemed to be beating the cadence against the varnished sides of the booth. Finally, separating it out into syllables, he said:

'Don't nom-i-nate. The hell I care.' Then after a silence, 'Signed, Tabusse.'

'In God's name!' said Milette.

Maria, with Tabusse's eye fixed on her, terrified, trembling, transmitted the message syllable by syllable.

'Don't . . . nom-i-nate . . . yes . . .'

When she had finished, everyone bent forward, as though to catch what was being said at the other end of the line, deep in the valley. But the receiver, still glued to Maria's ear, only made a little noise like a rattle.

'I'm transmitting what they've told me,' cried Maria. 'Don't drive

me crazy. I've said exactly what I've been told. . . . Tabusse is here . . . behind me . . . yes!"

Finally, she fell silent, and remained so for a moment, listening attentively, as though leaning out over the void of the valley half a mile beneath them. Then, rising, she said:

"Transmitted. . . . Four francs fifty."

BEATRIX LEHMANN

CRIME IN OUR VILLAGE

WHEN I was a child Mrs. Boote-Smith was the self-appointed Watch Committee of our village. She kept a pretty sharp eye on all things ethical and ran the children's Sunday School as a side-line. She had no young of her own but every winter she gave a children's party in her immense house and we had to go, whether we would or no, until the time we were no longer children. Only the children of the local gentry were invited and this party was the only thing Mrs. Boote-Smith did which had nothing to do with charity or good works. We played organized games; intelligence tests, memory tests. Guessing how many peas were in a bottle. Writing down from memory a list of objects shown us for a moment on a tray. Spelling games. Quotation games. Geography and history games, and never one single game of hide-and-seek. The whole thing was very painful and was made more so by the fear that one might meet Mr. Boote-Smith. When I was a child, Mr. Boote-Smith was in semi-liquid form and drooled in a bath-chair propelled by his coachman. I believe he had suffered a stroke but in solid form he had been a banker and he owned more than half our village. My brother Peter, who was in all things my opposite, was very strongly attracted to poor Mr. Boote-Smith and would spend a lot of time watching him and helping him with his false teeth when they slipped.

Mum, unlike Mrs. Boote-Smith, underestimated Hell-fire and saw good in most things and people. Even though she never ceased to attack Mrs. Boote-Smith, very politely and friendly-formal, across the tea-cups or the dinner-table, about the too-few cesspools for Mr. Boote-Smith's cottages by the mill-stream, she always said that nobody worked so hard for our village as Mrs. Boote-Smith. When Mrs. Boote-Smith told a new Vicar that he had come to Sodom and Gomorrah, Mum, whose only obsession was drainage, said that she was sure it was meant as a joke. Purely as a convention and a tradition, Mum believed in the solidarity of the village ladies and, when I was a child, they ran our village and I believe still do, with only a little interference from the Government.

My sharpest memory of Mrs. Boote-Smith is in conjunction with a criminal case. I must have been about eight years old at the time. I

was the criminal. Small purple cardboard boxes had been issued to each of us at the Sunday School. On the top of the box was a slit through which each child was to drop its pocket money to aid Mrs. Boote-Smith and Mr. Snag, our Curate, to finance a missionary to spread the Gospel amongst the natives of Darkest Africa. At the end of three months we were to write on the outside of the box the total of the amount collected within and return the sealed treasure to Mrs. Boote-Smith. Each box was numbered. My number, I remember, was sixteen. What I never reckoned with was the fact that Mrs. Boote-Smith kept a secret list and, against number sixteen, my name was inscribed.

During two months and three weeks I forgot all about it.

On a boiling hot Sunday afternoon Mrs. Boote-Smith rose up from the harmonium. One moment I had seen her from the back, the wistaria swaying over the brim of her black straw, her buttocks contracting and expanding like bellows as her feet pumped up the wind for 'All things bright and beautiful'—the next moment I saw her from the front and heard her say: 'Next week you must all bring back your boxes for the little black boys and girls. The child who has denied itself the greatest amount for the poor little black kiddies who want to learn all about what our Dear Lord did for them, will get a coloured picture of our Dear Lord in his crown of thorns as a prize.' Those were her very words and a darkness, the like of which Africa had never known, fell around me. I tottered home with a stomach ache.

At that time Mum was giving Peter and me threepence a week each as pocket money and what with *The Boys' Own Paper*, a penny-worth of acid drops and saving up for Mum's birthday, there was nothing left over for the missionary. I had only accepted the collecting box because I have never found it easy to say 'No' when 'Yes' is expected. Also I was in early youth very short-sighted and never foresaw the consequences of many of my actions.

My brother Peter was of quite another disposition. He had said: 'No thanks, I don't need one,' when Mrs. Boote-Smith handed him the purple box. She had gone quite pink and she bent over him and whispered: 'Now, I know you're really a nice, generous, little boy and not a meany-weany.' Peter smiled at her and said out loud, so that the whole class heard: 'I shall put gunpowder under you and blow you up.' Mrs. Boote-Smith had to leave him alone. The next Sunday afternoon he had laughed very merrily when our Curate was reading to us about Job and his misfortunes. It was Job being smote with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown (and

that on top of all the other things) that made Peter laugh and shout out: 'Oh, read it again!' After that, Mrs. Boote-Smith went to Mum and said she thought Peter was a bit young for Sunday School and he'd better have a little religious instruction at home. So every evening at home Mum read all the bits out of the Old Testament that made Peter laugh most, on condition he listened quietly to 'Shakespeare Told to the Children' first. With his foresight and inability to be intimidated Peter escaped the agony in which I found myself at this time.

I asked a few of my school friends, in a careless way, what they had done about their purple boxes. One or two, who were always chasing after the remission of their sins in any way that offered, had contributed a portion of their weekly pocket money quite regularly. Others who had indulgent parents had had their boxes filled for them. I realized that mine alone would be empty. Then, in my despair, I thought of the children who lived in the dirty cottages by the mill-stream. I knew that they had no pocket-money because Mum said that some of their parents sometimes had no money at all to pay the rent to Mr. Boote-Smith who owned all the cottages with the too-few cesspools Mum was always arguing about. I asked Nobby Clarke what he'd done about his purple box. Nobby said he'd put a button he found behind the brewery, a couple of nails he found in the road and several tin caps off the ginger-beer bottles from the School treat, into his box and he didn't suppose the niggers would know the difference. Nobby said most of his friends had done the same, with the exception of Tommy Nash who'd hoisted a paper sail on his purple box and sent it down the mill-stream the very same afternoon that it first came into his possession. Nobby's remark about the niggers not knowing the difference gave me hope. If the boxes were to be opened in Darkest Africa my nothing would never be traced but, still, I felt I'd better find something to put in that would make a bit of a rattle. I knew I couldn't make use of pebbles or buttons because I was the child of one of the richest families in the village and I'd been brought up to 'know better' and I had 'advantages'—so I was frequently told. It was no use appealing to Mum as she kept us 'short' as a matter of principle. We had threepence a week and not a penny over. If we couldn't make do on threepence a week now there was no hope for our future. . . .

I borrowed four farthings from Mrs. Cake, our cook, and dropped three of them into my purple box—I kept the fourth farthing because it was a new one and looked like half-a-sovereign. I wrote 6/6 on the outside of my box next to the number sixteen.

The fatal Sunday arrived.

Mrs. Boote-Smith marched down the aisle collecting the boxes and, horror of horrors, she rattled each box against her ear exclaiming: 'Well done, dear!' or: 'Is that the best you could manage, dear?' according to the sound given forth. She came to Nobby, she rattled, she exclaimed: 'Well done, dear!' and passed on. I glanced at him; he looked indifferent. She came to me and even before rattling she began to congratulate—then the three farthings bounced and made a noise like scattering flower seeds. She glanced at the inscription, rattled again, turned bright pink—and passed on. I leant back in the pew and closed my eyes for a moment. When she had collected all the boxes she said: 'Now children, I am going to open all your boxes while Mr. Snag is reading to you and the prize will be awarded to the most generous little girl or boy at the end of the service.'

I ought to have known better than to trust Mrs. Boote-Smith.

I glanced again to see how Nobby was feeling—he was still indifferent. He had never had 'advantages' . . . Also he had told me that Mrs. Boote-Smith would never dare come after him about his donation because his Mum would chase her off with a broom. I was so differently placed. My Mum wouldn't dream of raising her hand against Mrs. Boote-Smith—she would be far more likely to take a swing at me.

When Mrs. Boote-Smith came back there was a list in her hand.

'The first prize goes to Marcelline Tickler for her donation of 5/9. Thank you, dear, for your self-denial.' And then she added: '5/9 is the *largest* amount collected.'

Marcelline went forward, smirking, to receive the picture of Our Dear Lord in his crown of thorns. As she trotted past Nobby on her way back to her place he muttered out of the corner of his mouth: "'as 'e signed it for yer?' Mrs. Boote-Smith shot round, staring like a stoated rabbit. Not a child moved. After a pause Mrs. Boote-Smith softly called my name.

'Stay after the service, dear, I want a word with you.'

The others shuffled out. I was alone with Mrs. Boote-Smith standing above me as lofty as the Nelson column. Her body blocked the only exit from the pew.

'We've got a little bone to pick, dear,' she said. 'Shall we say a little prayer together.' No sooner said than done. Mrs. Boote-Smith and I knelt. My lips remained sealed while she prayed for light in my darkness. Her stays creaked as she got up.

'Six shillings and sixpence,' she said softly, and then laughed a little.

'I'm sure it was a mistake. . . . A nice, generous, little girl like you with a dear kind mother and so many advantages.'

That did it—the reference to Mum. It sounded like a threat to Mum, a veiled insult. I resolved to lie.

'What made you write 6/6, dear?'

'Because it *was* 6/6,' I mumbled.

'Ah, well, it couldn't be. You know I can count, dear. I was a very bright little girl at school and when I was your age I knew all about pennies—'

'6/6,' I said.

'Did you want the prize very badly, dear?'

'No,' I said, shocked.

'You shall have one just like Marcelline's if you tell me you *knew* it was a little fib.'

I began to cry a bit then and to shout: 'It was 6/6,' between sobs.

'Hush, dear. This is God's house, and He can hear you.'

'6/6! 6/6!' I yelled.

Mrs. Boote-Smith fastened her fingers into my shoulder. I decided to kill her. I had no weapon to plunge into her heart or slit her throat. My fists drummed on the busks of her corsets like pebbles on a gasometer. I kicked her shins and bit her on the hand. She closed with me, bearing down, enveloping. I was down amongst the hassocks clawing my way through her petticoats and boots. I got through somehow and fled. The Sunday lanes were empty. The church bell gave no alarm. Peter was playing in the garden with his tricycle.

'Your face is as red as a tomato,' he said, interested. I smacked him and he yelled. Mum sent me to bed for smacking Peter without provocation.

I lived in dread for several days and suffered a loss of appetite and an inability to concentrate in school hours.

But Mrs. Boote-Smith, who to my surprise got about as usual, did not report to Mum or to any living soul. I expect I filled her prayers as she did my dreams. Perhaps her silence was due to the unwritten code of the village ladies. They never interfered with the conduct of each other's families—only the families of the poor were interfered with. Or perhaps she feared that reference to the need of Darkest Africa for the Gospel would provoke Mum into speaking of cess-pools.

As the years went by Mrs. Boote-Smith decimated our ranks. She caught Nobby picking apples in her orchard. It was a wonderful year for apples and we also had more than we knew what to do with. Nobby got a conviction which put an end to his ambition to become a bus-driver. He said that his police record would probably keep him

out of everything really big except road-mending. Tommy Nash's brother Cecil burnt her hay-rick one November and he had to go to a reformatory. Laura Wells, who went straight from the Council School to Mrs. Boote-Smith as kitchen maid, got into trouble with a person unknown and drowned herself in the mill-stream just outside her parents' front door. In the diphtheria epidemic that followed the flood that broke all the records, Mrs. Boote-Smith spent a year abroad. By that time Mr. Boote-Smith was completely liquidated and she had inherited more than half our village, but she still refused to sell the only practical site for the sewage farm Mum dreamt of. When she returned to our midst she and Mum were no longer on calling terms; they just wagged the trimmings on their hats at each other in passing.

Whenever I happened to meet her, which was always entirely by accident, she would say: 'Ah, dear—' and then stop short and her eyes would narrow as if a thought had struck her.

Now, this is a confession, or method of easing the mind, for it is extraordinary how upon odd occasions, before undergoing an anaesthetic, or on windy nights at sea, I get a vision of Mrs. Boote-Smith, all rumpled and steaming, alone in the aisle of our village church, twenty years ago.

Nevertheless, if before the Judgment Seat there is any form of bullying, I shall swear it was 6/6 and that the only crime on my conscience is that I still owe Mrs. Cake four farthings.

A MIRROR UP TO NATURE



GORONWY REES

POLITICS ON THE LONDON STAGE

IN Shaftesbury Avenue, about eleven o'clock in the evening, you may see the audiences leaving the West End theatres. It is one of the most depressing sights in London, and in those pre-occupied faces you can see all that is wrong with the English theatre. These are the people who dictate what a play must be like in order to succeed. Very few of them go to the theatre regularly; the theatre is too dear for that, and for most people play-going is an expensive excursion on which they can take their families or their girls. The play must not occupy the whole mind, which is intent at the same time on organizing the expedition, buying chocolates, making sure that everyone is happy, observing the decorations of the theatre and the behaviour of the rest of the audience, taking care of one's appearance, picking out the eminent and the distinguished. In a West End theatre the drama is in the audience and not on the stage; and the dramatist, with only a small portion of men's minds or hearts in his work, cannot afford to strain their attention. On the other hand, he is protected against all but the most superficial criticism, of the kind that asks whether Sir John was right to conceal his past from his wife, discusses the dresses of the leading lady, and applauds the charm of an actor's manners.

Yet even the surface of men's minds is subject to change, and in recent years it has been brutally invaded by politics; wars, slumps, revolutions have driven crime and divorce off the front page and written themselves in headlines on the blank sheet of the theatregoer's mind. An interest has been created; the dramatist must try to satisfy it, and his attempt seems bold and original in a world that has been limited to adultery in Mayfair, family life in Hampstead, and crime in the East End. . . . But the habits of a lifetime are not easily shaken off, and the dramatist, who for years has found that a gift for dialogue and a fairly accurate observation of personal character have been sufficient to make a play, now tries with the same equipment to handle a political theme. The results are startling and sometimes enjoyable; but politics refuse to respond to such treatment. For, after all, the first condition of writing a political play is a certain degree of political knowledge. The crudest political journalist cannot get along without some grasp of political facts and events, and even a nodding acquaintance with history, but this is far more than can be expected of the

dramatist. He has not found knowledge necessary before and does not see why he should now. He writes as if Hitler were the son of the Kaiser and the Labour Party composed of Bolsheviks. In Robert Sherwood's successful play *Idiots Delight* a revolutionary socialist, who has the sympathy of the author and the audience, delivers eloquent speeches that were out of date even in 1918, and behaves in a way that would have got him expelled from any political party long before, as here, he is put against the wall by the brutal fascist soldiery.

In detail, perhaps, such criticism is unimportant; but it is probably his ignorance, half conscious, that drives the political dramatist into the realm of fantasy. He cannot stage a political action because he has no notion what political action is like or what it is about. Therefore he has to construct a situation from which political action is necessarily excluded. Sherwood collects a miscellaneous group of characters forced by accident to spend a night in a luxury ski-ing resort on the top of an Alp. In another anti-war play, *Bury your Dead*, the author has to invent the embarrassingly poetic fiction of six dead soldiers refusing to be buried. They stand up in their graves and recite the joys and sorrows of their past life; there is not even one who says, as soldiers sometimes do: 'Death is best because there is no reveille.' In *Geneva*, Shaw has to write a wholly irrelevant first act to account for the presence of three dictators and a British Foreign Secretary at a judicial session of the Supreme Court at the Hague.

2

In the two anti-war plays, *Idiots Delight* and *Bury your Dead* this element of fantasy, of deliberate falsification, is pushed still further. Either through ignorance, or a refusal to face the most obvious of facts, war is represented as wholly inhuman, inconceivable, and purposeless. Of course, the same judgement is repeated every day by politicians, of the Right and the Left; but their actions are very different from their words. Only the most obvious kind of verbal ambiguity gives any plausibility at all to their statements. War is inhuman only in the sense that it is inhumanitarian; in every other sense it is one of the most human of activities, engaged in by men for purely human purposes. 'War is the continuation of foreign policy by other means' said Clausewitz; in the same way, the activities, passions, beliefs of men and women in war-time are the development of their activities and experiences in time of peace. Precisely for that reason modern society shows so intense a horror of war. It is the horror of Caliban seeing his face in the mirror.

In these two anti-war plays, war is a natural catastrophe, an act of God, or a maniac, or an inhuman armament maker, all sufficiently fictional characters for their actions to have no meaning. War is thrust from the outside upon an unwilling and uncomprehending mankind, and war is so wicked, unreasonable and destructive that it can have nothing to do with the ordinary experience of men and women. For the audience, such a view is extremely gratifying, and a release from all responsibility. Against acts of God there is no defence, and not even insurance. But wars are acts not of God but of men. It is not irresponsible lunacy which drives Japanese generals to bomb Canton or Franco to destroy Guernica. Their purpose is perfectly intelligible. That others think their means somewhat excessive for their ends does not turn them into maniacs.

How does the dramatist come to make so wild a mistake? Primarily it is due to a misconception of the motives that actuate men and women in politics. Politics only exist where there is a group, and they exist wherever there is a group. Any presentation of a group, so long as it is actual and organic, is to that extent political, and no play, whatever its ostensible subject, whether war or revolution, can give any insight into politics if it does not present a group. The political man is a man who thinks the interest of the group to which he belongs more important than any particular interest any member of it, including himself, may have. Yet a group, acting through its members, is capable of actions of an amorality which would never be permitted in an individual. One has only to observe a family, in its relation to outsiders and to its members, to realize how much its activities surpass, in selfishness and unselfishness, the activities of any of its members individually. What is true of the family is even truer of the class or the nation, and so long as a dramatist presents his characters as isolated persons, meeting and parting, he cannot write intelligibly or usefully about politics—or, perhaps, about anything else.

Yet, as if driven by a determination not to write politically about political issues, the dramatist goes to extraordinary lengths to create precisely this difficulty for himself. *Bury your Dead* selects six nameless soldiers, having no common life except that of death, as the heroes of the play. Sherwood ensures that his characters shall be brought together fortuitously, for one night only, in an environment with which they have no ties. It is not surprising that under such conditions politics and war should become meaningless.

In *Geneva*, Shaw has taken precisely the same precaution. His politicians, Bombardino, Battler, Flanco de Fortinbras, are lifted out of the world in which they operate and transplanted into the abstract

and insipid air of the Hague. Of course, Shaw knows a great deal about politics, but, as 'the licensed jester of the English middle class,' he takes care to sterilize his knowledge. The dictators are, as Mr. Shaw prides himself, allowed to present their views without essential distortion; but their views are carefully abstracted from the world of action in which they have any significance. It almost seems as if, in the case of dictators, Shaw is willing to take the word for the deed. Of course he would be the first to admit that he has not attempted to portray politicians or political action. He gives all that his method allows him to give, the expression of abstract political opinions. He stages not a play but a political debate and that is all that is possible if you begin by abstracting your characters from the environment that makes action possible. Even more, he has staged a meaningless debate, full of sound, fury, and some comedy, since only the actions they are meant to conceal or idealize give any meaning to political theories. How curious that Shaw, who professes to despise the fatuity of Parliamentary debate, should stage an even more fatuous and protracted debate for himself.

3

There are other consequences of this method of abstraction, or fantasy, which are worth noticing. By separating himself from the world of political action, the dramatist deprives himself of any means, except the most unsatisfactory, of ending his play. If, as with Shaw, the fantasy develops into a mere debate, there are two ways out. You can pretend to give a solution to the conflict of opinions; but this after all is too insulting for your audience, which is aware that the logical battle is supposed to have some relevance to actual political conflicts, which seem to refuse to be settled for long except by resort to force. Or, like Shaw, you can shrug your shoulders and say: 'Man as a political animal is a failure,' and introduce a world catastrophe which once again emphasizes the meaninglessness of all that has been said but at least puts an end to the interminable argument. All this may be fairly plausible if you have taken Mussolini and Hitler, and not even in their actions but in their words, as the type of the political animal. They are a failure, but the failure is Shaw's; and his conclusion is an empty judgement on the achievements of humanity. I doubt if Shaw would make the same comment on the French or Russian Revolutions, or the American Civil War, and the present crisis does not differ in kind but in degree from the crises of the past; and now as then it is precisely men's success as political animals which is a major cause of their difficulties. The ending of *Geneva* is instructive, not

because it provides the wrong solution for the battle of opinions, but because any solution must be wrong. The political dramatist should not be writing about political arguments; he should be writing about concrete political situations.

The other resource of the dramatist, who, by his construction, by his choice of situation, by his *dramatis personae*, has put himself in a false position, is to suggest that the conflict is not a political one, that is between one political force and another, but a conflict between an irrational, destructive political world, and a rational creative world in which personal emotions are dominant. In *Idiots Delight* and *Bury your Dead* this is represented as a conflict between Love and War. One might think that when the bombs begin to fall, there is not much room for Love. Love, one might think, was a subsidiary issue. Not at all, says the dramatist, it is the meaning of the conflict. In *Idiots Delight*, the Russian adventuress leaves the armament maker when she realizes his machines are going to destroy millions of lives. She is recognized by the American showman as the girl he slept with in the Middle West in the year of the slump; and as the play ends, they embrace rapturously, and sing a paean of defiance to the bombs falling around them. In *Bury your Dead*, war's interference with Love is presented as its greatest evil; and how many Left Wing plays have not ended with mystical assurances that from the present conflict will emerge, as its final purpose, a world fit for lovers to live in? This may be true or not, and is gratifying to those who desire such a paradise, but it throws singularly little light on a humanity preparing to tear itself to pieces. Yet little more than this can be said if one makes a political play out of essentially unpolitical material.

4

It is a relief to turn from these plays to *Babes in the Wood*, the Unity Theatre Christmas Pantomime, where fantasy is in place and not merely a device for concealing incompetence or ignorance. Perhaps because the fantasy has been consecrated by tradition, it sharpens the point of the satire, whose objects are the recognizable figures and events of actual political life. The Unity Theatre has taken all the elements of the familiar pantomime, the fairy tale, the Cockney aunt, the sentimental songs, the topical jokes, the principal boy, and used them to glorify the Left Wing movement and parody the Right. The parody is more successful than the glorification. Mr. Chamberlain, in his role as the Wicked Uncle, shows all those qualities which have so endeared him to the British public since his apotheosis at Berchtes-

gaden. Everything is there, the stringy neck, the protuberant slightly maniac eyes, the awkward gestures of the novice being groomed for stardom, the terrifying moments of inspiration and irrational triumph, the lapses into despondency and disillusion; whenever he appears the audience is transfixed by a horrible fascination. And again, the Fairy Wish Fulfilment, with her slightly cracked, genteel voice, is a genuine creation of popular art; all the candied blessings of the Sunday newspapers are in her voice, all the awful abysses of nonsense in the unsteady legs. It is hard to make political satire at the present day, for the reality exceeds the wildest excesses of the satirist. He is apt to appear as a feeble wit following vainly in the rear of some gigantic jester. In the Uncle and the Fairy, the Unity Theatre has succeeded completely, and of the two I prefer the Fairy. Even Mr. Chamberlain's most devoted admirers are sometimes disconcerted by his physical eccentricities; while the Fairy brilliantly summarizes some traits of English society which have not yet been exposed to the harsh light that shone at Munich.

Where the pantomime fails is in adopting in their entirety the form and sentiment of the traditional version. The swinging tunes of the appeals for unity; the wholesome gym-mistress charm of the principal boy; the inanity of the song *Let's all linger under ladders*; the incompetent fairy ballet; all these imitated, not parodied, their model with such success, that unconsciously I was overcome by precisely that illusion of satisfaction with the world which Drury Lane specializes in producing. One would have been grateful for a little more savagery and harshness in the satire and music, something of the spirit of Herbert Hodge's *Cannibal Carnival* in the Unity Theatre's early days; I should not have resented some satire directed at the Left Wing itself, and it would have strengthened the message the pantomime was intended to give. Surely Left Wing intellectuals, for instance, are as good a subject for satire as Mr. Chamberlain, and the exposure of their illusions a valuable political service. No doubt such satire is difficult in the days of the Popular Front, but it seems to me particularly suitable for a cultural organization like Unity. These criticisms may seem an ungrateful return for so much entertainment, especially as it dispels the idea that there shall be no more cakes and ale in the Left Wing theatre; only I should like the ale a little stronger and the cakes a little coarser and I shall always leave a theatre somewhat uneasy if, by whatever means, I have been made to feel that all will be well if only we are good, work hard, and stick together, and that the morality of the Left Wing movement has much in common with that of the Boy Scouts. Surely satire at least should not convey such illusions.

*The Wicked Uncle: a scene from the
Unity Theatre Christmas Pantomime.*



John Vickers

John Vick

*Paul Robeson in 'Plant in the Sun,'
at the Unity Theatre.*



To the Unity Theatre, London owes not merely the pantomime, but more important, the three best political plays that have been performed recently. Of these, the first is Stephen Spender's *Trial of a Judge*, which seems to me by far the most serious attempt at political drama that has been made in England in recent years. Indeed it is more than an attempt; despite its faults, it is an achievement. One important, if simple, reason for its success, is that its author has complied with what is, I think, the one condition which a political play must fulfil. He has not invented an occasion for discussing politics; he has taken a concrete political situation, and by doing so he has at least given his characters the possibility of existing as political beings. His subject is the murder of a Polish Jew by Storm Troopers in Silesia in 1932, and the effects which flow from it, and he rightly sees in that event a precise and accurate symbol of the crisis with which the German middle class was faced at that moment. He represents the middle class in the liberal and humane Judge who has first to condemn and then reprieve the murderers; in his first decision he obeys his respect for the law, in the second, the demands of political expediency, and in both he symbolizes the dilemma of the middle class.

Yet, just as Milton identified himself with Satan, so Spender, to the spectator at least, has identified himself with the liberal Judge, and from this, I think, arises the sterility of his play. Such sterility is in no way incompatible with beauty, and *Trial of a Judge* is a play of great beauty. But it is the beauty of some frozen Arctic landscape, suffused with moonlight, where nothing grows and nothing lives. For the Liberal middle class is not merely caught on the horns of its dilemma, it is lacerated by them, and in its pain can make no objective judgement on its situation; if it could, the dilemma would not exist. All it can do is to lick and explore its wounds, and this is precisely what Spender does. His play is an exploration of the mental tortures of a class in decline; and it is conducted with such scrupulous honesty, delicacy and precision, that it will remain a classic statement of the case.

As such, 'a tragic statement,' Spender describes it, and yet a statement is far removed from tragedy or drama. The decisive action is over by the end of the first act, where the Judge has had to deliver judgement and reverse his sentence. Hamlet's doubts take five acts to resolve; they determine the tragedy. In *Trial of a Judge*, the doubts, fears, tortures, are subsequent to, and a commentary on, the tragic action. The greater part of the play is a recital of the contradictions with which the Judge is faced, and the *dramatis personae* abstract embodiment

ments of the parties to his spiritual conflict, the Fascists of his fears, the Communists of his pity for the oppressed. But no dramatic conflict can arise from such material; there can only be a static statement of opposed forces, to which, once again, there can be no dramatic conclusion. The contradictions with which the Judge is faced cannot be resolved in the mind. They are the intellectual reflections of a material conflict, between material forces, which can only end with the victory in the real world of one force or the other. There is no mental solution to the problem, there is only its history. Indeed it is not a problem, but a struggle; and by representing it merely as reflected in the mind of an individual, however generalized, the writer must fall into 'the sterile task of reconciling class contradictions.' This sterility, as I have said, can have great beauty, and *Trial of a Judge* proves it, but politics are not concerned with beauty, nor is the political writer, except as a by-product of his main purpose. His primary task is to transcend personal and subjective conflicts so that he may give a picture, as truthful as possible, of the objective conflicts which are the subject matter of politics, and this is not possible if the writer, however great his sympathy and understanding, describes not the world of action but the mind which mirrors it.

6

Trial of a Judge brings on the stage a class, the working class, which is notably absent from the other plays I have described. This in itself gives the play a greater political significance; for certainly no play to-day can have much relevance to the actual position if one of the determining forces in it is ignored. I do not mean that in every political play the working class must take the stage in person; but its pressure on other classes, its determining influence on events, must be a part of the dramatic situation; for politics without the working class is like shadow boxing as compared with a prize fight.

In *Trial of a Judge*, the working class appears, but it appears only under the form it takes in the mind of the Liberal, just, and humane Judge, that is, as an object of pity, compassion and sympathy, and as the subject of suffering, poverty, injustice. It plays a passive rôle because it has lost the name of action. But again, unless the working class is endowed, as in the real world, with the capacity, not merely for suffering, but for spontaneous action, there can be no true representation of the political struggle; it is only that capacity which makes the struggle either necessary or possible.

Waiting for Lefty, by Clifford Odets, and *Plant in the Sun* by Ben Bengal, are both superior to *Trial of a Judge* in recognizing this capacity and therefore giving a more truthful picture of political conflict; and I think *Plant in the Sun* the better of the two because its characters are moved by wholly political motives. Both plays take the story of a strike, *Waiting for Lefty* of a taxi strike, *Plant in the Sun* of a packers' strike. But it is noticeable that Odets finds the motives for his strike, not in the common experience of his group of taxi men, but in their individual histories. Perhaps in the end he is less concerned with analysing the actions of the strikers than in making an indictment of Capitalism; the taxi strike, though treated with complete realism, is a symbol for him of Capitalism's inevitable result, is the dramatization of a theory. The play opens with the taxi men's executive deciding whether to strike or not. The trade union boss is against it; the men are waiting for Lefty, their natural leader. This is followed by a sequence of short scenes which show how each member of the committee has come to be a taxi man, and why his individual experience has led him to be in favour of striking. Each wishes to aim a blow at Capitalism. One has been a hospital doctor and lost his job because he is a Jew. Another an unemployed actor, who has read the Communist Manifesto. Another a boy who cannot get married because a taxidriver's earnings are too low. Another has a wife who threatens to leave him unless he can provide properly for her and her children. All these scenes are presented with enormous vitality and liveliness; yet one has the sense that they are described less for their own sake than for the conclusion they demonstrate. By an ingenious invention, the actor who plays the crooked trade union boss also plays the part of the employer in the other scenes; this simple device is brilliantly successful, for it enables Odets to indicate the relative positions of the taxi men, their union bosses, and the employers, and it also gives cohesion to the play. Nevertheless, the action is diffused. The intense interest of the struggle in the committee is broken by the history of its members. And I feel that it is this diffusion, necessary in the interests of a theory, which makes Odets introduce excessive and melodramatic effects and allows him to end on a false note of optimism.

The individual defeats of the taxi men have to be recompensed by the collective victory of their decision to strike. Moreover, the strike is, in one sense, over-motivated. Each man has to have his own private and sufficient reason for striking. In that sense the psychology of the play seems to be false; and its conclusion false also, for the strike is made an answer to each man's personal problems. When seeing *Waiting for Lefty* on the stage, I have often felt that much of its popularity

is due to the feeling of the audience that for them also a strike would be the answer to their personal problems.

Yet, despite these criticisms, *Waiting for Lefty* is an excellent play; and its value as propaganda is enormous. *Plant in the Sun* appears to me even better, especially because the problems of the political dramatist have been solved with such complete success that the play has an extraordinary unity and perfection of form: indeed it would satisfy all the conditions of the classical unities. Perhaps this perfection cannot be shown better than by applying the standards which have been applied to the other plays. There is no element of fantasy, either in the setting or in the construction: the action is limited completely to the possibilities of a few hours in the packing room of a great mail order house. The purpose of the play is not to express opinions about politics; the words and actions of the characters are devoted entirely to the practical necessities of organizing a sit-down strike. The motives are not personal but political; the cause of the strike is the dismissal of one of the characters without sufficient reason, and none of the characters has any reason to strike except as a member of a group which is threatened, and the action of the play is indeed the growth and strengthening of the group unity. There is no conflict between the personal and the political life; the private emotions are subsidiary to the political, and love is a few moments of matter-of-fact flirtation with one of the girl hands, who themselves are drawn into the political action of the strikers. Finally, there is no attempt either to raise or solve a problem. The strike is defeated, brutally and decisively, and the play does no more than show how under the pressure of a single act of injustice the solidarity, loyalty, and capacity for action of the packers increase. I do not know what conclusion can be drawn from the play; but the sense it gives that history is thus and thus, that this is the reality of political action effects a profound release of emotion and gives a satisfaction that cannot be equalled by an attempt to impose a solution, however admirable. The real is better than what ought to be.

Bengal leaves it to the spectators to draw whatever lessons they choose. He tells the history of a political action and does not attempt to explain or justify it. With that the task of the political dramatist is performed. History alone teaches men how to act, and if the dramatist makes men see more clearly and distinctly the history of which they are a part, he has done all that can be asked of him as an artist or a politician.



Humphrey Spender

「The Judge is judged; a scene from Stephen Spender's 'Trial of a Judge.'

Bombardino and Battles; a scene from Bernard Shaw's 'Geneva.'

J. W. Debenham



BERTOLT BRECHT

THE INFORMER

From a sequence of plays on life in the Third Reich

Translated from the German by Charles Ashleigh

A rainy Sunday afternoon. Father, Mother and Son have just finished Sunday dinner. The Maid enters.

MAID. Herr and Frau Klimbtsch would like to know whether you're in to-day, Ma'am?

HUSBAND (*Growlingly*). No.

(*Exit Maid.*)

WIFE. You should have gone to the telephone yourself. They know we couldn't have gone out yet.

HUSBAND. And why couldn't we have gone out?

WIFE. Because it's raining.

HUSBAND. That's no reason.

WIFE. Well, where would we have gone, anyway? That's what they'll be asking themselves now.

HUSBAND. There are plenty of places.

WIFE. Why don't we go there then?

HUSBAND. Where would we go, anyway?

WIFE. If only it wasn't raining.

HUSBAND. And where would we go, even if it wasn't raining?

WIFE. In the old days at least you could meet a few people.

(*A pause.*)

WIFE. It was a mistake—you not going to the telephone. Now they'll know we don't want them to come and see us.

HUSBAND. And what if they do know?

WIFE. Well, it seems unpleasant—that we should drop them just when everyone else is dropping them.

HUSBAND. We're not dropping them.

WIFE. Why couldn't they come here then?

HUSBAND. Because Klimbtsch bores me to death.

WIFE. He didn't bore you in the old days.

HUSBAND. The old days! You get on my nerves with your 'old days' all the time!

WIFE. At any rate, you wouldn't have cut him in the old days, just because the schools inspectorate has brought proceedings against him.

HUSBAND. I suppose you mean that I'm scared?

(*A pause.*)

HUSBAND. Ring them up, then, and say we've just returned because of the rain.

(*His wife remains seated.*)

WIFE. Shall we ask the Lemkes to come over?

HUSBAND. So that they turn in another report that we're not keen enough on air raids precautions?

WIFE (*to Boy*). Klaus-Heinrich, let the radio alone.

(*The Boy takes up the newspaper.*)

HUSBAND. It's a catastrophe that it's raining to-day. But how can one live in a country where it's a catastrophe when it rains?

WIFE. Do you think that's very sensible—saying things like that?

HUSBAND. Inside my own home, I can say what I like. I'm not going to be gagged in my own—

(*He breaks off as the Maid comes in with the coffee cups. They remain silent while she is in the room.*)

HUSBAND. Why must we have a girl whose father is our block-warden?

WIFE. I think we've discussed that question enough. Your last opinion was that it has its advantages.

HUSBAND. Oh, what I said and what I didn't say! You go and tell your mother anything like that, and we're in the soup!

WIFE. What I tell my mother—

(*Enter Maid with coffee pot.*)

Just leave it here, Erna, and you can go then. I'll pour out.

MAID. Thank you very much, Ma'am.

(*Exit.*)

BOY (*looking up from paper*). Do all priests do that, Dad?

HUSBAND. Do what?

BOY. What it says here in the paper.

HUSBAND. What's that you're reading! (*He snatches paper from him.*)

BOY. But our group-leader told us that we may know everything that's printed in this paper.

HUSBAND. What your group-leader says doesn't apply, as far as I'm concerned. I'm the person to decide what you shall read or shall not read.

WIFE. Here's ten pfennigs, Klaus-Heinrich. Go and buy yourself something.

BOY. But it's raining.

(*He leans against the window, undecidedly.*)

HUSBAND. If they don't stop printing those reports of the priests trials, I'm going to stop taking the paper.

WIFE. And what paper will you take? It's in all of them.

HUSBAND. If filth like that is in all the papers, then I shan't read any of them. I wouldn't know any less about what's going on in the world!

WIFE. It's not so bad for them to have a clean-out, like that.

HUSBAND. Clean-out! It's just politics—that's all.

WIFE. At any rate, it doesn't concern us. After all, we're Protestants.

HUSBAND. It's not a matter of indifference to the people, if they can't think of their church without thinking of all these abominations.

WIFE. Well, what do you want them to do when something like this happens?

HUSBAND. What should they do? Perhaps they could mind their own business for a while. Things aren't any too pure in their Brown House either, so they say.

WIFE. But surely it's only proof of the recovery of our people, Karl?

HUSBAND. Recovery! A fine recovery! If that's what recovery's like, I'd rather we stayed ill.

WIFE. You're so jumpy to-day. Has everything been all right at the school?

HUSBAND. What could go wrong there? And please don't keep on saying I'm jumpy—that's what makes me nervous.

WIFE. Don't let us always be quarrelling, Karl. In the old days—

HUSBAND. Ah, that's just what I was waiting for! In the old days! Well, neither in the old days nor nowadays do I want my child's imagination poisoned!

WIFE. Where is he, by the way?

HUSBAND. How should I know?

WIFE. Did you see him go out?

HUSBAND. No.

WIFE. I don't understand where he could have gone. (*Cries.*) Klaus-Heinrich!

(*She runs out of the room. She is heard calling. Then she returns.*) He's actually gone out!

HUSBAND. Why shouldn't he go out?

WIFE. It's pouring with rain.

HUSBAND. Why are you so jittery just because the lad goes out for a bit?

WIFE. What did we talk about?

HUSBAND. What's that got to do with it?

WIFE. You've been so unrestrained lately.

HUSBAND. I have not been unrestrained lately. But even had I been, what would that have to do with the boy going out?

WIFE. Well you know that they listen.

HUSBAND. Well?

WIFE. Well—. Supposing he tells it to others . . .? You know, as well as I do, what they always tell them in the 'Hitler Youth.' They are deliberately ordered to report everything. It's funny he should go away so quietly.

HUSBAND. Nonsense.

WIFE. Didn't you notice when he left?

HUSBAND. He stood leaning against the window for quite a while.

WIFE. I'd like to know just how much he heard.

HUSBAND. But he knows what happens to people who are informed against.

WIFE. And that boy the Schmulkes told us about? They said his father's still in the concentration camp. If we only knew how long he stayed in this room.

HUSBAND. I tell you it's all nonsense!

(He goes into the other room and calls the Boy.)

WIFE. I can't imagine that he'd simply go off somewhere without saying a word. He's not like that.

HUSBAND. Perhaps he's gone to see one of his classmates?

WIFE. If so, he can only be at the Mummermanns'. I'll call them up.

(She goes to telephone and rings up.)

HUSBAND. I think it's all just a false alarm.

WIFE *(on telephone)*. This is Frau Furcke. Good afternoon, Frau Mummermann. Klaus-Heinrich isn't with you just now, is he?—No?—I simply can't think where that boy has gone.—Tell me, Frau Mummermann, are the 'Hitler Youth' rooms open on Sunday afternoons, do you know?—Oh, they are!—Thanks very much. I'll inquire there.

(She hangs up. The two sit silent for a while.)

HUSBAND. What could he have heard, anyway?

WIFE. You spoke about the newspaper, you know. You shouldn't have said that about the Brown House. You know how strong his national feelings are.

HUSBAND. What on earth did I say about the Brown House then?

WIFE. You couldn't have forgotten! About things not being too pure there either.

HUSBAND. That cannot be construed as an attack, my dear. 'Things not being pure,' or, rather, as I said, with the definite modification, 'not being *too* pure.' That makes a difference—a considerable difference,

in fact. It was rather a remark made in jest, in the manner of the people, in colloquial language, so to speak, not really meaning much more than to say that everything there is not perhaps, under the circumstances, always quite as the Leadership might like it. As a matter of fact, I deliberately expressed the purely suppositional character of my remark in the use of the modifying term, 'so they say.' Yes, I remember exactly how I formulated my remark: 'they say' that things are not too—note again that modifying 'too'—pure. I didn't say things were *not* pure—I said that 'they say' that they are not—*too*—pure. How could I say they were not pure, when I lack proof? Naturally, wherever there are human beings, there are certain imperfections. That is precisely all I intended to indicate, and even that in the most moderate manner. And in this very connection the Fuehrer himself, on a certain occasion, expressed his criticism in a far sharper manner.

WIFE. I can't understand you. You shouldn't talk like that to me.

HUSBAND. I wish I didn't have to! To tell you the truth, I don't even know what you go chattering about everywhere—about things which may perhaps be said under the influence of excitement in this place. Let it be understood, of course, that nothing could be further from my intention than to accuse you of frivolously disseminating any rumours against your own husband, any more than I would for a moment accept the idea that our boy would ever undertake anything hostile to his own father. However, there is unfortunately a vast distinction between the commission of evil and the realization of it.

WIFE. Well, stop now! You'd do better to keep a watch on your tongue! The whole time you've been going on, I've been worrying as to whether you said that about not being able to live in Hitler-Germany, before or after what you said about the Brown House.

HUSBAND. Why, I didn't say that at all.

WIFE. Now you're acting as though I was the police! I'm just racking my brains as to *what* it was the boy could have heard.

HUSBAND. The term 'Hitler-Germany,' as a matter of fact, is not in my customary vocabulary.

WIFE. And then that about the block-warden, and about all the lies in the newspapers, and what you said the other day about air raids defence—the boy never hears anything from you on the positive side. That's not good for a young mind. It's harmed by that kind of thing, and, as you know, the Fuehrer is always saying Germany's youth is Germany's future. You know the boy isn't the kind who would just go out and denounce somebody for the fun of it. Oh, I feel positively ill!

HUSBAND. But he's revengeful.

WIFE. But what would he want to be revenged for?

HUSBAND. How the devil do I know? There's always something. Perhaps because I took his tree-frog away?

WIFE. But that's a week ago already.

HUSBAND. But he takes notice of things like that.

WIFE. Well, why did you take it away?

HUSBAND. Because he caught no flies for it. He was letting it starve.

WIFE. Yes, he's got so much to do.

HUSBAND. Well, that's not the frog's fault.

WIFE. But he hasn't talked about it for some time. And then I gave him ten pfennigs. He gets everything he wants.

HUSBAND. Yes, that's bribery, I suppose.

WIFE. What do you mean?

HUSBAND. They'll say right away that we tried to bribe him so that he'd keep his mouth shut.

WIFE. What do you think they can do with you then?

HUSBAND. Anything they want to! You know there are no limits. Great God! And I'm supposed to be a teacher, a trainer of youth. And I'm scared of them!

WIFE. But there's nothing against you, is there?

HUSBAND. There's something against everybody. Everybody's suspected. It's enough if someone expresses any suspicion of you, to make you a suspected person.

WIFE. Yes, but a child is an unreliable witness. A child doesn't understand what people are talking about.

HUSBAND. That's what you say. Since when have they needed witnesses?

WIFE. Can't we think out some explanation of what you meant by those remarks? Then we could show how he misunderstood you.

HUSBAND. Yes, but what did I say? I can't remember now. It's this damned rain that's the cause of it all. It makes people bad-tempered. After all, I'm the last person in the world to say a word against the great spiritual exaltation which the German people is now experiencing. Why, I predicted it all as early as the end of 1932.

WIFE. Karl, we haven't time to talk about that now. We've got to get everything arranged in our minds, and quickly. We mustn't lose a minute.

HUSBAND. I can't believe it of Klaus-Heinrich.

WIFE. Well, first there was that about the Brown House and all that filth.

HUSBAND. I didn't say anything about filth.

WIFE. Yes, you did—you said the newspaper's full of filth and you weren't going to take it any more.

HUSBAND. Yes, the paper but not the Brown House.

WIFE. Couldn't you have said that you disapproved of this filth committed by the priests? And that you believe it's these people, who are now on trial, who used to put about those false stories about the Brown House and everything not being pure there! And that they should have attended to their own business instead? And that you told Klaus-Heinrich to let the radio alone and to read the paper, because you're of the opinion that children in the Third Reich should look clearly and plainly upon whatever is going on around us.

HUSBAND. That won't help us.

WIFE. Karl, you mustn't give in, I tell you! You must be strong, as the Fuehrer always—

HUSBAND. I cannot stand before a court and see my own flesh and blood in the witness-box testifying against me.

WIFE. You mustn't take it that way.

HUSBAND. It was a crazy mistake for us to associate with the Klimbtsches.

WIFE. But nothing's happened to them.

HUSBAND. Yes, but there's an investigation pending.

WIFE. And what if everyone against whom there's an investigation pending should despair!

HUSBAND. Do you think the block-warden has anything against us?

WIFE. You mean, if they went to him for information? We gave him a box of cigars for his birthday, and his New Year's tip was a good one too.

HUSBAND. Yes, but the Gauffs next door gave him fifteen marks.

WIFE. I know, but they used to read the *Vorwaerts* as late as 1932, and they showed the black, white and red colours in May, 1933.

(*The telephone rings.*)

HUSBAND. The telephone!

WIFE. Shall I answer?

HUSBAND. I don't know.

WIFE. Who could it be?

HUSBAND. Wait a minute. It's stopped now. If it rings again, you can answer.

(*They sit silent. The telephone does not ring again.*)

HUSBAND. Life is not worth living any more!

WIFE. Karl!

HUSBAND. You have born me a Judas. He sits at our table and listens

while he drinks the soup we serve him, and notes everything his parents say—the spy!

WIFE. You shouldn't say that.

(*A pause.*)

WIFE. Do you think we ought to get the place prepared a bit?

HUSBAND. Why? Do you think they'll be coming so soon?

WIFE. They might.

HUSBAND. Perhaps I'd better wear my Iron Cross?

WIFE. Of course you must, Karl.

(*He gets the decoration and fastens it with shaking hands.*)

WIFE. But they've nothing against you at school, have they?

HUSBAND. How should I know? I'm ready to teach whatever they want me to teach. But what do they want me to teach? If only I were always sure of that! How do I know how they want Bismarck pictured, for instance? And the new text-books are so long coming out. Can't you give the girl ten marks? She's always eavesdropping.

WIFE (*looking around*). And Hitler's picture there—wouldn't it look better if we hung it over your writing-table?

HUSBAND. Yes, do that.

(*Wife takes picture down.*)

HUSBAND. But if the boy tells them that we've changed its position, it'll look like consciousness of guilt.

(*Wife restores picture to former place.*)

HUSBAND. Wasn't that the house-door opening?

WIFE. I didn't hear anything.

HUSBAND. It was!

WIFE. Karl! (*She embraces him.*)

HUSBAND. Don't lose your head, dear. Just pack me some shirts and underwear.

(*The door of the flat opens and closes. Husband and wife stand rigidly side by side in a corner of the room. The room door opens and their Son enters, a paper bag in his hand. There is a pause.*)

BOY. What's the matter?

WIFE. Where were you?

(*The Boy holds out the bag of sweets in explanation.*)

WIFE. Is that all you were doing—buying candy?

BOY. Sure. What else?

(*Eating his candy, he walks out of the room. His parents gaze searchingly after him.*)

HUSBAND. Do you think he's telling the truth?

WIFE (*shrugs her shoulders, is silent*).

ANDRÉ VAN GYSEGHEM

OKHLOPKOV'S REALISTIC THEATRE

To begin to talk about Moscow's Realistic Theatre it is necessary first to acknowledge quite frankly that Okhlopkov's theories are not new. The power of this theatre lies in the re-statement of old ideas in the light of an entirely new social system, and for that reason it is better not to analyse the theories themselves but to watch them first in actual performance and then begin to disentangle the closely woven threads of old theories and new ideology.

Unless you are a re-incarnated Elizabethan or a disciple of William Poel you will find your first visit to this theatre disconcerting. I certainly did—disconcerting and salutary. The impression made by the production of Gorki's *Mother* was tremendous; it altered my whole conception of the art of the theatre and I no longer find satisfying the old technique of playwriting and production. The limits have been removed, the horizon widened.

The theatre itself is nothing to look at—a small hall with a balcony at one end, a level floor and originally, I imagine, seating accommodation for about 700 people. But the moment you push through the swing doors into the auditorium you realize this is no ordinary theatre. Before your eye has a chance to stray to the end where the stage should be you see that the seating has been re-arranged in an odd and rather huddled way to make room for a series of platforms and steps, and when finally you do look for the stage—there isn't one. The auditorium is the stage; the stage is the auditorium.

In the centre there is a circular platform approached on all sides by steps—in the centre it is about three feet high, almost at shoulder level of the audience seated around it. All the way around the wall of the auditorium there is a narrow balcony four feet from the floor. Heavy leaden plaques of the arms of Imperial Russia hang at intervals on the walls above it and the edge of the balcony is festooned with sagging iron chains. These plaques and chains are the only representational scenery used. At one end of the hall there is a platform reaching out towards the centre stage and connected to it by an aisle, while two other aisles stretch from the centre to the sides with steps up to the balcony. Thus the audience fills in the space which is left between the aisles and around the centre stage, and thus the acting area is all around

and on each side of the audience. No curtain, for there is no proscenium—no painted flats, for the audience must see the players from all sides—no footlights for the same reason.

To the stroke of a heavy gong the house lights go out and music begins, a sombre military march of the old Tsarist days. Accompanying the music is the steady rhythmic tramp of feet and the jingling of spurs. The sound swells until it seems to beat into our brains, louder and louder—there is a cry in the dark, and a shaft of light shoots down on to the stage. The Mother is standing with outstretched arms, terror in her eyes—another spotlight and we see the husband at the other end of the hall, a bearded drunken brute, swaying on his feet, his little red-rimmed eyes blazing cruelly as he advances slowly towards his wife. The play has begun.

Light takes the place of the curtain; when the scene finishes the spotlight fades and another comes up in a different area as a new scene starts. The spectator is all the time asked to give his full attention and is constantly having to change his viewpoint of the action. Sometimes it may be on the centre stage, or on the platform at one end, while at others it may be at some point along the narrow balcony. The play is written in dozens of scenes, sometimes only of a few lines, and the climaxes are sharp and attained in ways quite different from the methods of the old theatre. Great effect is achieved by the contrast of one scene with that immediately following it, as in cinema cutting. The tension of a scene can be heightened by illuminating one character only at a crucial point, as at the end of the play when the Mother is in the railway waiting-room with the propaganda leaflets hidden on her. For a second, every now and then, the spotlight picks out the spy, listening, snooping around, ominous in his very ordinariness. The suspense is terrific as we watch at the same time the killer and his prey.

This theatrical form, this projection of the action into the sphere of the audience, is as old as man and can be traced back to many similar traditions in theatrical history. The flower-walk of the old Japanese Kabuki Theatre, the Elizabethan stage with the audience on three sides, the circus ring, the Greek amphitheatre and the native tribal dance, all these have in common the quality of close physical contact with the spectators which Okhlopkov has made inimical to all his productions. It is not a surprise, therefore, when we learn that he was for some considerable time a student in Meyerhold's theatre. There he must have imbibed the revolutionary concepts which dispensed with footlights, curtain and representational scenery—there he must have learned to break a play up into hundreds of tiny scenes and switch the

action into locales undreamed of by the author. There too, he must have learned to use the body of the actor in a plastic and dynamic way which later became indispensable to him in his three-dimensional acting—and there, too, he must have absorbed some of Meyerhold's affection for the traditional Chinese and Japanese theatres.

Okhlopkov himself sets out the creative principles of his theatre in the following six headings—

(1) We discard the traditional box stage and take the action of the stage to any part of the auditorium that serves the purpose.

(2) In carrying the action into the auditorium we put our stage effects not only in the middle of the hall with the stage surrounded by the public on all sides on the arena principle, but also around and above the audience.

(3) We have introduced 'montage action'. As a result the action may be transferred from one 'set' to another, frequently situated at some distance from the first, not only at the end of one episode and the beginning of the next but at any time *within* the episode.

(4) We have introduced music into the drama as a powerful aid to the *regisseur* (*producer*), permitting him to set the atmosphere of the play, reveal its pulse, its respirations.

(5) These conditions have demanded a different type of acting. The close intercourse between actor and audience disciplines the actor and stimulates him to strive for unusual exactness in his emotional expression. Without this 'inner rightness' he would simply be unable to support the fixed gaze of an audience which completely surrounds him.

(6) We are opposed to naive photographic naturalism with the insistence on all details of the material milieu inherent in it. We limit ourselves to giving a mere outline of the scene of action, using only what is most essential. In this way we assert the realism of the theatre through theatrical means, appealing to the imagination of the audience and at the same time providing it with a powerful stimulus. Thus the audience co-operates with the actors in every performance, so that the actors applaud the audience as well as the audience the actors.

In his theatre Okhlopkov carries Meyerhold's theories to their logical conclusion. Contact with the public, which Meyerhold achieved by ignoring the proscenium, he obtains by dispensing entirely with the proscenium stage and building a new stage for each play, designed specifically to suit the author's requirements and his production. He even brings the audience into physical contact with the players at times.

There is one scene in *Mother* where the old woman, awaiting the return of her son from the prison, is laying a meal for him. The actress playing the part chats to the spectators in the seats nearest to her, gets them to hold the bread and dishes while she spreads the cloth and confides to them her excited happiness until they come to share her feelings and in this way seem actually to take part in the emotional action of the play.

It is undoubtedly true that there are many plays which are not suited to this treatment, and Okhlopkov has had his biggest success with plays that have been specially written for him. His recent production of *Othello* has not had the success that the modern Russian plays have met with, and this in spite of the Classical wave that is sweeping the country. The extent of collaboration between author and producer is one of the aspects of his work that make it remarkable. The version of Gorki's novel was especially written for his theatre, as were the scripts of *The Iron Stream* and *Aristocrats*, and it is because the dramatist and the producer were able to work side by side with the same end in view, understanding each other's objectives and moulding the form of the play at the same time, that the finished product in the Realistic Theatre is such a complete work—satisfying, unforced, and harmonious.

Perhaps Okhlopkov has never gone further towards mixing his public with his players than in his production of *The Iron Stream*. Produced first, I believe, in 1934, this is a play about one of the many Partisan fighting groups that supported the Red Army in all parts of the vast Russian country during the period immediately following the 1917 Revolution. The play is concerned with one group that has got cut off from the main army and is making a long and arduous track across country to rejoin them. It is a tale of the heroism of men and women in the face of privation and the constant fear of attack, the loves and hates, the discipline and lawlessness, their high hopes and their human terror until finally, after repulsing the Whites in what seems to be a losing battle, they sight the main body of the Red Army corps.

When you come to see this play the doors to the auditorium are kept locked and the gradually increasing audience is herded in the foyer until the stroke of 7.30. Then the doors are flung open and you surge in—to pandemonium! The auditorium is full of noise and actors—everywhere, men, women and children, making love, singing to the accordion, hammering and repairing gun-carriages, hanging out the washing, spanking and nursing children—hubbub! Having recovered from that shock you proceed to pick your way gingerly

Scene from 'The Iron Stream,'
the Moscow Realistic Theatre.



The Promotional Assembly at the Moscow Realistic Theatre



to your seat, dodging the washing on the line, clambering over the shafts of gun-carriages, removing the children that sprawl in your path and only just avoiding a splashing from the young woman returning from the well swinging a pail of water. All this takes some time, and when you finally do sit in what you hope is your seat the noise has begun to subside and out of the babble emerge lines of decipherable dialogue. The play has begun.

The effect is astonishing. You are all tied up with these people from the very start. As the characters begin to take shape *as* characters you realize that this is the girl who offered you a slice of bread as you pushed past her to your seat—that this fellow you stumbled over and he cursed you, that this child got entangled in your feet. The shape of the acting area, or stage, is so designed as to weave in and out of the seats, an irregularly raised hillocky platform along two sides of the wall and jutting out in two long tongues into the middle of the hall. Here again the change of scene is effected solely by a change of light, music is used freely, and the only scenery is a sky cloth against the wall and a few realistic trees which can be and are moved during the intervals.

The finale is an expression of the sixth principle quoted above. The Partisans finally sight the army and come rushing over the brow of the hill to meet them—but *we* are the army, you and I sitting in our seats. The actors rush into our midst, clasp us by the hand, weep tears of joy on our shoulder—and the play is over.

Perhaps one of the most important new elements which Okhlopkov's method has introduced into the theatre, second in importance only to the planned production resulting from author, producer and scene designer working in close collaboration, is the point he makes in the fifth principle. The actors have to develop a new stability, have to create a more truthful mental image and maintain it with a constant and complete absorption. They have in truth to BE that character for the time. Okhlopkov has based his acting method on that of Stanislavsky and by the concentration of attention, by the careful building up of the truth of the part, the actor is made to stand the close scrutiny of his audience. No slackening of this stability can be permitted, for the spectator will be conscious of it at once—he cannot relax for a single moment. He cannot have a breather by turning his back (a trick all too common on our stage) for the audience is behind as well as in front. He cannot hope for any help from the details of the scenery surrounding him, for there is none. The eyes and attention of the audience make a living wall, hemming him in. He must create his surroundings out of his imagination or he will never be able

to convince his audience that he has any surroundings. And here we see the difficulty Okhlopkov sets himself. The Stanislavsky method of acting relies upon every detail of the stage helping the actor in his work of creation—the Meyerhold method of production throws this overboard and uses anything that will serve to stimulate the imagination of the audience to the act of creation. To weld these two styles together is the fascinating problem that the Realistic Theatre has before it, and it is this that makes it one of the most interesting theatres in the world to-day. In the Soviet Union its place is unique, for so strongly has the Classic revival swept the country that most contemporary writers are concentrating on mastering the Classic form of play-writing and demanding that the style of production shall match the play. The Realistic Theatre stands alone, an island of experiment acting as a bulwark against the conventional back-wash. The effect of its work upon other theatres was, however, negligible until Okhlopkov made them all sit up with his production of *Aristocrats*.

Pogodin, like his predecessors, wrote this play for the Realistic Theatre—and it became overnight the success of the year. Soon other Moscow theatres were presenting it in their own styles and it was included at once in the repertoires of theatres all over the Union. In the summer of 1935 at least three of the provincial theatres visiting Moscow were playing it and it must have been translated into sixty odd languages. While we must not detract from the importance of the play itself—the stirring topicality of the theme, the rich humour and humanity coupled with Pogodin's brilliant staccato style of writing—yet I think it is undoubtedly true to say that it was the method of presentation which made such a deep impression on the audience. Pogodin supplied a brilliant skeleton—Okhlopkov filled in the nerves and muscles.

The theme is one with which every Soviet citizen is familiar—the building of the Baltic-White Sea canal by a band of criminals, thieves and wreckers, a theme of special interest to the dramatist because of its profound psychological situation. None of the prisoners wants to work; the majority of them have never worked in their lives, stealing, lying and prostitution have filled their world. But here, in the bleak Karelian countryside, there is no one to steal from but themselves; the prostitutes get no money for their trade which reduces its attraction, and the engineers, at first planning to wreck the project, finally become fascinated by the gigantic constructional job before them. An opportunity to build on such a large scale has never come their way. Little by little the resistance of the prisoners is broken down and they begin to work—slowly, awkwardly, unaccustomed

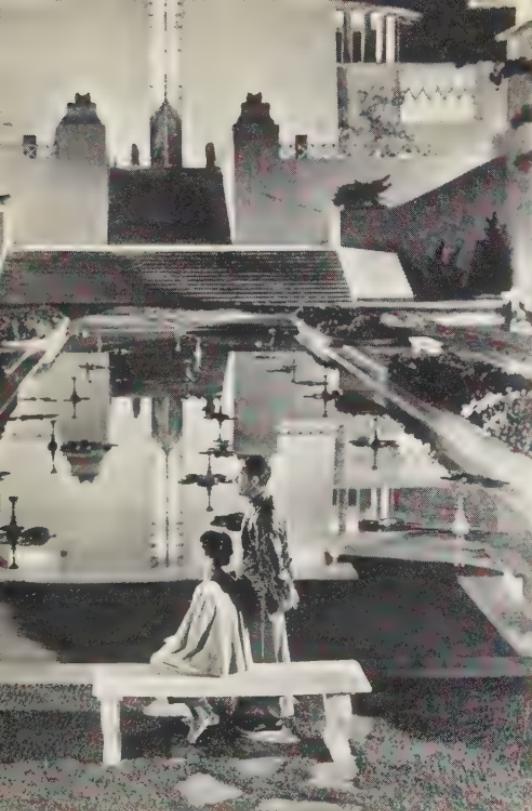
to picks and shovels, they begin to build not only the canal but themselves. From hooligans they grow into reliable citizens; it is possible that some of them are sitting in the audience.

The design for this production is even more formalized. Two rectangular platforms touching each other at one corner occupy the centre of the hall, raised some three feet from the floor. The only decoration is three huge wall panels symbolically painted to represent the changing seasons. As in all his plays, Okhlopkov opens with shock tactics. A crowd of young people, masked and wearing a simple uniform of cold Arctic blue, enter in the dark and to the accompaniment of the howl and shriek of the wind, tear across the stage showering themselves and the audience with white confetti. The thin, reed-like wind instruments in the orchestra play a swirling symphony as the lights come slowly up and the first few actors stagger across the stage fighting the blizzard. In among them dash the masked figures, tossing the confetti into their faces, high up into the air, everywhere. They run off, to return again in a whirl of wind and confetti—and are off again.

These masked attendants become an integral part of the structure of the play. Okhlopkov uses them as the old Chinese property men were used in the traditional Chinese theatre. No props are set on the stage but these masked figures leap on with whatever is needed—and only the barest necessities are used. A tablecloth stretched between two kneeling figures and we have a table, chairs are carried on and off as required, if a character has to telephone a masked figure springs silently to his side with a telephone and vanishes when he has finished. Unobtrusive, impersonal. There is one moment in the play when Sonia the prostitute is beginning to feel the possibility of a new life. She is alone after a gruelling time with the Commissar Gromov, and within her she begins to feel a new spring of life—she fights it and welcomes it at the same time, she expresses herself in violent movement, running the whole length of the stage, throwing herself on to the earth, touching the flowers, feeling the earth as it were for the first time, laughing and trying not to laugh. She never utters a word but there is one of the blue figures following her all the time and he is playing a violin—lovely, clear, spring-like tunes. It is a breath-taking moment, extremely simple and extremely moving. This is but one of the instances when Okhlopkov magically uses formalism to substantiate reality. The whole time he is demanding that the spectators use their imagination. He flings them an inch and they take a yard—he sketches a faint outline and they see a richly coloured picture. With ineffable taste and unerring instinct he chooses just that one

object, colour, shape that touches the fire of their imagination and so between them they give the author's words life.

If I end on this note it is because this is the clue to his work and his success. The time when the audience were asked to watch a play on the stage as though they were looking through a keyhole into someone else's life is past. In all the Soviet theatres the spectators are asked to give as much as they take, but in the Realistic Theatre this co-operation is lifted into an art form and woven into the fabric of the play. The life of the players and the life of the audience are fused.



Hollywood imagines Utopia: a scene from
Capra's 'Lost Horizon.'

By courtesy of Columbia Pictures

Hollywood comes down to earth: a battle scene
King Vidor's 'The Big Parade.'

By courtesy of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer



BERTHOLD VIERTEL

HOLLYWOOD KEEPS ABREAST

ELEVEN years ago, on my way to Hollywood, I saw and heard in New York for the first time Fox Movietone Newsreels. The screen was able to produce sound, to talk. A revolutionary—a liberating experience. Modern life had created for itself a new organ of expression. The film had achieved a new dimension; why didn't the film makers use it? But Hollywood was still concerned with silent films only. Even the most progressive producers answered my eager queries with a contemptuous smile. The movietone was good enough for ordinary trivial reportage, the smashing of whisky bottles by policemen, the noises of horse-racing in Tijuana, the clamour of the betting crowd, and last but not least the lonely bird who used a pause in the mass excitement to utter his simple melody of three innocent notes. This bird more than anything else revealed to me the new possibilities.

The art of the cinema, if one believed Hollywood, was reserved exclusively and for ever for pictorial sequences unfolding rhythmically, a kind of absolute music in black and white. Photographic values and expressive camera angles had become so popular that they were often applauded. The story-telling in films had developed its own dramatic laws. It was accentuated by the close-up and by the moving camera, a more recent invention. The human behaviour on the screen had become that of a more or less discreet and fluid pantomime, accompanied by melodramatic orchestras. Only as often as the situation and the gestures proved insufficient, printed titles provided a rudimentary minimum of dialogue. These titles were considered unwanted but unavoidable. Just at that moment, Carl Mayer, the German film writer—pioneer-author of 'Caligari' and 'The Last Laugh'—brooded in his secretive way over a manuscript that would express its story without the help of even one printed title. This would have been the first absolutely silent film that told a human plot only by moving pictures. I am confident that this ingenious man would have reached his aim triumphantly if silent pictures had not died a sudden death too soon.

They had achieved a definite form and an astonishing height and variety of expression. Swedish, American, German, French and Russian film making—in the midst of the wholesale production of

popular entertainment that made films into an enormous, world-wide industry—had marched on different lines of progress. One truly could speak of film art as a new art. Perhaps its most original product was Charlie Chaplin's grotesque-comedy, something between the eternal knock-about and a modern Molière, equally enjoyable to the rich and the poor, to the masses and the critical intellect. The bourgeois origin of this new kind of entertainment was being sublimated and liquidated by the Chaplinesque laughter, by the humour of an anarchist, a philosophically minded tramp, who, always falling and rising again, leap-frogged his way through the social and technical environment of his time and age. If people were asked in a round-game who was the most popular man of this epoch, some would say Chaplin, some Lenin, some—alas!—Hitler. Since the latter occupies the front pages of our newspapers and the talkies have taken over the screen, Chaplin has dwindled into the background; heroes must compete in talk nowadays.

Serious American films permitted social satire only in minor details which were often brilliantly exact, even though the main tale was utterly silly. French and German directors behaved more extravagantly. The Germans chose eagerly the outlet of symbolism and expressionism; before the Nazis, they were keen technicians of the sinister and the abstruse. It was an escape, the demonic grimace over an abyss. As greater in real stature I consider the remarkable attempts to create epics; the epic became the principal form of the silent picture. Nordic sagas, mostly after novels of Selma Lagerloef (the directors Mauritz Stiller and Sjoestroem); pioneer and democratic Americanism; Griffith, Henry King and others sublimated the Western and even pushed forward into the jungle of the big Eastern cities which is much tougher to clear. My favourite epic-maker has been King Vidor whose work I found more of the modern age than that of the others ('The Big Parade,' 'The Crowd'). King Vidor, too, like most of the film makers, was a romantic, but he chose for his hero no longer the individual, but the people.

This tendency broke through, victoriously, in the Russian films which were the pictorial harvest of the Soviet Revolution. Eisenstein, Pudovkin and others created in their work an epical continuity that had no need to borrow from the magazine story and the novelist's or the dramatist's plot, that neglected the whole range of bourgeois wish-dreaming. The Russian film of this type was as widely separated from the theatre as from literature. It used neither actors nor make-up. It took its human material from the streets, the workshops, the fields, and from the trenches of civil war. The people, fighting for

their rights, struggling under their social conditions, living through the world-changing events of recent history, tilling the land and regenerating it, spreading over cities, in streets, houses, on the roofs: what an abundance of real life, burst open before the bewildered and fascinated eyes of the Western world. If, in contrast to the 'entertainment' of the industrial films these were condemned as 'propaganda,' their result was, nevertheless, an enrichment in truthful objectivity as well as in technical skill. When I say 'truthful,' I mean, first of all, the pictorial truth, which is the fruit of what I would call the conscience of the camera. The object was not being flattered as in commercial film making. By this I do not hint at the vehement caricatures of the social enemy (which are, in their way, negative flatteries), but at the accuracy in depicting the smallest detail.

This reaching-out for reality opened new territories and methods that have not been used enough since. So many things awoke in these films to a significant life: machinery, our productive and destructive means in peace and war; the buildings, squares, and monuments of Moscow; the landscape; everything that human beings use and abuse. The life rhythm of this onslaught convinced utterly. And the Russian decoupage was nothing but a painstaking intimacy of the view, fanatically concerned with the observation and reflection of the movement. The analytical behaviour of the camera made the pictorial continuity more intense and concentrated.

One might have thought that the interest of audiences in the real life conditions and the professional manners of mankind, once aroused, would have insisted on further nourishment and on the widening of the scope of general picture making. Surely the day must come when clerks and shop girls get bored with Monte Carlo and the other less beautiful coasts of society enjoyment including well-furnished drawing-rooms? No, boredom seems still far ahead. The bourgeois ideal is the only one yet existing for the majority. Riches denied in life have to be possessed on the screen. That the Russian pictures expressed political zeal, a passionate conviction, should have incited the ambition of other creeds to argue their point of view. Well, if one looks closely at it, every picture makes propaganda, commercial pictures too. The latter try to convince us that we live in the best possible world. Commercial picture-making follows obediently the line defined by the taboos of ruling society. This is the first thing a producer has to learn who tries his luck in Hollywood.

An analysis of the world production from this angle gives very illuminating results. Once, Emil Jannings, in Murnau-Mayer's 'The Last Laugh' or in Sternberg's 'Blue Angel' (after one of Heinrich

Mann's brilliant satirical novels)—in the one as a sacked hotel porter, later degraded to a caretaker in a W.C., in the other as a school teacher who, inflamed by a little whore, runs amok—was the representative image of Germany, beaten in the War and thrown into anarchy by inflation. Times change and pictures change with them. To-day Jannings represents wholeheartedly the idol of Nazi manhood, as the super-industrialist, who creates his surplus value for his belligerent fatherland. That as an example. American epics in silent days covered and idealized all phases of American society from the pioneer picture to the encouraging fables of the prosperity creed, a religion that meant success in business; to the adventures of the World War which increased prosperity; to the hero-worship of the gangster whose brutal manliness tickles both sexes of a satiated bourgeoisie. Sternberg's 'Underworld' was a much more subtle romance (for the sophisticated) than the tender 'Seventh Heaven' of the poor who indulge in sentimentality while the more brutal people divide between themselves the prey of their legitimate or illegitimate robberies. Whoever liked the picture 'What Price Glory,' remembers it as a fresh and keen Brueghel, full of hearty applause for the barbarians who had fun as never before in helping the Frenchmen win their war and the French women lose their husbands. Even—sinister foreboding!—'What Price Prosperity' was filmed, under the title 'The Crowd.'

'The Crowd' had an exemplary theme: boy and girl of middle-class breeding, small but charming people, start out in their golden youth with all the illusions of prosperity. Their illusions break down in a mass manufactured life, they do not find happiness, not even prosperity. They are the bricks with which the dome of plutocracy is built: some of them get worn and are thrown away. But the dome itself had soon to be shaken. The big crash came. A year before that came the talking pictures.

Almost the first talking picture was a monster success and saved not only the firm which produced it, the Warner Brothers, from a crisis, but—as has been said—the whole picture industry. The product that made an epoch, 'The Jazz Singer' happened to be the sentimental story of a crooner whose sonorous voice and whose popular songs exalt him to the heights of money and fame, but who is less fortunate in his family life. A success story combined with the sentimental appeal of fatherhood. Al Jolson, the singer, made up as a negro, Al Jolson, the husband, deserted by his wife, pressing the baby son into his arms; 'Sonny Boy' sung tearfully by the great Al Jolson! The industry, too, shed tears, but happy ones—so did the whole American, and not



Courtesy of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

A scene from King Vidor's 'The Crowd.'

Charles Laughton in 'Mutiny on the Bounty'

By courtesy of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer



only American, public, and an unparalleled boom was experienced. In the age of monopoly capitalism every technical achievement has the most dramatic consequences. What a book could be written about the very involved events that made Western Electric the exploiting master of the new situation and delivered the whole production into the hands of four or five big firms. Upton Sinclair, in his biography of William Fox, describing the intrigues which dethroned this film king, gives an account well worth study of the economic warfare which followed the big change. Tragedies of this kind could be conceived in blank verse as the German dramatist Brecht tried in his 'St. Joan of the Slaughter Houses,' a chronicle of the Chicago 'Jungle' of the meat-canners. Such happenings are wildly pathetic without missing the element of farce. An enormous activity in banking and building set in. New cities of sound-proof stages rose overnight. In the following period thousands of dome-like theatres were erected, indeed, too many, as was discovered later. The speculation in shares, in theatre-chains led to catastrophes which brought old firms into danger and deterioration. There were rumours that a motion picture sovereign went broke because he trustingly bought too many shares in his own firm. The boom of the talkies was cut across by the sudden end of prosperity. But the talking pictures survived it all.

The talkies changed the conditions of the producing forces. Not all the stars who were able to shine and to look beautiful were able to talk and to sing. A new kind of talent was needed. Talking meant acting, too, and the most handsome men become silly, the most beautiful women ugly if they act without capacity, while true passion and talent vivify the brittle form and make it transparent for the beauty of the soul. New tragedies, new careers. Writers had to be called in who possessed not only the power of seeing and inventing images but who expressed themselves naturally through the word, through argument (which is the contagious germ of dialogue), who were able to build scenes. The taste of the audiences, so far bribed by the beautiful movement of bodies and the sweet immobility of faces, had to change. And the continuity—which is the very soul and true morality of pictures—changed. New tricks had to be learnt to keep things on the screen going. In the beginning the audiences satisfied themselves with the new sensation of the reproduced and synchronized sound. With naive pleasure they identified noises and were thrilled when a spoon touched a cup because it sounded so natural. The louder the better. The discrimination came later. In a very short time, people got used to the ugly deformation of the machine-made human voice.

The producers were clever enough to know that this first state of affairs would not last for ever. Many a problem came in sight.

As quickly as possible Hollywood provided itself with reinforcements from New York, from the legitimate stage and imported material, patterns, ideas; and people, actors, playwrights, even directors. I saw the triumphant entry of the halt and the lame; the muscular free-air type, the man of the eye, no longer held the key positions. People with brains and spectacles arrived, intellectuals. In the fine climate they soon got healthier and lost quite a bit of their city mentality, but not all of it. The remainder, not extinguishable by Hollywood, nevertheless had its effect. Poets stopped writing verses and spared the eloquence of the heart for their drunken hours; but some of their nobility went into pictures.

In silent days the director had exercised an absolute tyranny. He was the only man in whose mind the continuity of the kaleidoscopic parts and particles existed. He possessed the thread leading through the labyrinth of shots and takes. Very often he built and modelled and changed the story while shooting. The writer was his slave, and the producer utterly dependent on him. His imagination ruled and played with amiable freedom (or with a grim one, as exercised for years by Erich von Stroheim, the Strindberg of silent films). The risk of his errors was, in the majority of the cases, not so fatal. One could save the film, later on, by cutting the material and changing details, sequences, even the whole story. Now, the dialogue, synchronized with the constantly moving picture, brought every detail more or less into a rigid system. One had, to a great extent, to think and to construct beforehand, to decide on the story, its values and its economy, on nearly every word of it, before shooting the picture. This hard necessity gave the director a rival, the writer, who perhaps could have turned into his superior, if writers had been interested enough in picture making, and if the upper hand had not been reserved for the supervisor, the so-called producer, the man who bore the responsibility of the invested capital.

The outcome was that money ruled even more ruthlessly than before. The great director of the silent days had, in extreme cases, usurped a reign of terror. For his ambitions—the homogeneous form and the sensationalism of his effects—he not seldom sacrificed the interests of the firm, sometimes the firm's very life. He displayed the bad manners, the dangerous moods of a star. Now the producer was enabled to rule by division. The consequence was progress in the rationalization of labour. The increased apparatus made it more difficult for one man to manage the whole machinery. The sound

engineer got into position. The sound cutter, the mixer, and the synchronizer followed. Not only many writers, but many kinds of writers were needed for the completion of a picture: story-tellers, continuity constructors, and dialogue writers. It became more and more rare to develop a personal style.

The photographer, too, found himself badly limited. A very annoying staginess seemed, at first, inseparable from the talking picture. People talked in stiff groupings or sat on chairs around a table and talked. One knew no better, in the very beginning, than to borrow from the stage old-fashioned plays and well-worn operettas, and to photograph them, nearly as they were. And how was one to split the dialogue into different angles of view without losing its flawless continuity? There was a time when one shot with three or four cameras at once to protect oneself and to execute at the same time, in the same setting, long shot, medium shot, and close up. Pictorial values distilled from the experience of years dwindled away. Lighting became flat and primitive again, more so than ever. Such were the childhood illnesses of the talking picture, never fully overcome.

Of course the new picture form would have required a new kind of producer, too. Such men appeared, after a while, but in insufficient numbers. The old ones—once the pioneers of the picture business, who developed it from the peep-show into a majestic industry—remained and kept the power in their hands; they disintegrated and diminished slowly. They, perhaps, guaranteed a certain steadiness in the change-over. They helped to adapt the new forces; to corrupt the new minds, too. They worried, successfully, about the contact with mass audiences—on the level of the mentality of a twelve year old child, as they say—and never lost sight of mass production. The talking picture had an inborn tendency to develop a different shape that would have brought disaster upon the industry. One had to struggle for the magazine story to remain the fashion of Hollywood, with all its pretty falsifications, its smoothness and agreeable flatness of photography and its *bourgeois* ethics. The taboos for ever!

In this connection it might be mentioned that Hollywood did not continue, in the epoch of the talking pictures, to be the undisturbed paradise that it had been in the days of the silent camera and American prosperity. Language, intellect, and the world crisis have awakened social consciousness. World-beloved stars, paid with fabulous salaries, have turned into Communists, into belligerent members of the very active Anti-Nazi League and into defenders of the recently pardoned Californian martyr, Tom Mooney. The actors' organization achieved

considerable power—a menace that can do any quantity of harm any day. The Writers' League started a fight for independence and reasonable rights which was suppressed quite ruthlessly. Hollywood knows and uses the institutions of the stool pigeon and the spy who supply the black lists of the studios with odious names. But the social bodies have reached a union with their fellow brothers in New York. The isolation of Shagri-la is no longer valid. Hollywood is the place perhaps of a future revolution and surely of a thorough re-organization and regeneration.

In these ten years the talking picture has not only overcome many of the clumsinesses and rudenesses of its infancy; it has reached, in some respects, a remarkable refinement. Sound has not been used for all its dramatic expressiveness, far from it. But the relation between sound and image, between word and picture, has become interwoven much more intimately, in a cunning and sometimes even in a really artful manner. A very different style of continuity and significance, as compared with silent days, has been achieved, by interesting short cuts. Sound and word save many a detour which the silent picture had to make, rather clumsily and quite primitively. Experience has developed a new art of elimination which does not, if ingeniously handled, exclude all visual subtleties. The urge for tempo, this driving power of films, has taught the talkie-constructors valuable lessons in how to use the enriched instrument. It must be granted to the cinema that it has improved the sense of timing, and our sensibility to it; and in a more mental way, talking pictures have done so even more distinctly than anything before.

The most original, the most complete form has, in my opinion, again been reached by the grotesque comedy, or something of its kind: Walt Disney's 'Silly Symphonies.' They have taken over, in sound, a large part of Charlie Chaplin's kingdom and conquered new territories. They are no bastards of the legitimate stage, but utterly pictorial. Instead of using actors, they design their creatures, create them with supreme freedom of imagination out of the very rules of movement and expression which they obey with a never before dreamt-of flexibility and elasticity. These masterpieces are produced by a collective group of artists, and yet reveal a unity of form that derives from the one man who is the master mind behind it all. Moving picture, talk, and music, everything is utterly in character and inspired by a kind of fun that makes adults children again. Photographically, they use the greatest variety of angles, of contrasts in size, of groupings, of flying, jumping, creeping, and dissolving into

each other, every change brought about as by a magic touch. They have added, happily, colour to complete the expressiveness of their fabulous world. These pictures are fables, acted mostly by the vegetable and the animal world. But their animals have proved so human that Fascist governments had to ban them, in order not to compromise the inhuman inflation and pompousness of their own ideology. If Walt Disney were politically minded how much more aggressively could he employ his power of satire which he now uses only occasionally and very amiably for teasing Hollywood. But has any director been able to do more than tease Hollywood?

Consider what has happened with the films made from plays. The drama thrives on thesis and antithesis, and the better it is the less it forces the synthesis. The integrity of its dialectics guarantees the drama its value, above egotistical interests and cheap justice. The dramatist is the judge of his epoch; he might be a reactionary or a revolutionary man but he cannot be a salesman. But even the most sincere adaptations of stage plays which were successful because of their realism cunningly avoid the complete moral at the end, if not throughout. When I mentioned this trick of the talking films to a small group of picture-conscious students at the London School of Economics I was asked whether a film like 'Dead End' confirms such a critical observation. Did not the picture reveal drastically the dreadful social conditions under which the kids of the slums in New York are driven into crime? The original play was a melodrama with some biting realism. The depraved boy goes to prison all right because the offended rich man insists on his punishment. But—as the picture adds nicely—an expensive lawyer will be hired who will get him out again. The additional little wink of the right eye suffices to lull the social conscience and to sweeten the melodrama. Surely a trifle, not worth mentioning? It is the daily guerrilla warfare of every truly productive mind who works in Hollywood, his desperation and ultimately his decline. Pictures by themselves blur our sober outlook, they have a dynamic effect that overwhelms us, an aggressive power over our imagination which nobody, who is once caught by the appeal, can escape. That is the magnetism of this medium, the special optics of pictures. Talking pictures have added acoustics. One word leads to the next, and together they have to make sense. Hollywood has managed with great cunning and amazing craftsmanship to put the recalcitrant word under control. An immense amount of work, knowledge, talent, served this purpose. An army of the most efficient technicians excels in it. The market is jealously watched, detailed statistics are incessantly

studied, production with the utmost sensitiveness follows every sign of a change in appetite of the mass audiences, every slightest alteration in manners and moods. The market of Hollywood is the world market. All Hollywood hating and baiting is childish that does not face the fact that Hollywood is not just a spot at the shore of the Pacific Ocean but is situated all over the world wherever its product is wanted by the vast ticket buying majority.

The sweeping success of pictures is commensurate with an increased world population—increased since the War which devastated old cultural and social traditions. It shows that for these indiscriminate masses the seventh heaven of bourgeois happiness is still valid and the aim of their wish dreams. Hollywood follows this trend as the world picture book for the adults, editing one hopeful and encouraging page after the other. With its roots in American life it could do so without hesitation after the World War which made the United States a foremost world power, greatly increased its prosperity and its *élan vital*. While Europe was already in turmoil and disaster shaken by social and economic fevers, the new world over there still bloomed and boomed, with a perspective of seemingly unending progressiveness ahead. While the great novelists and realists, Dreiser, Upton Sinclair, Sinclair Lewis, and Dos Passos distinguished already the change of democracy into a ruthless plutocracy and prophesied the crisis—a writer like Hemingway, having his origins in the War sublimated the nihilism resulting from it—the epics of the silent picture era still scooped out of the stream of optimism enough to spray it over the rest of the world. They looked back to the pioneer origins, emphasizing the success which they have brought about and looked forward into the splendid future of a country so rich in resources and forces. The crash of 1929 broke this victorious rhythm. It put the States on one level with the crisis of the rest of the world. The economic disaster made people think and feel. Dwindling saving accounts and disappearing investments that left nothing behind them but bad air revolutionized the outlook. The banker was no longer a God-like figure into whose care one could trust one's fate. Prosperity? Perhaps. But not without a thorough reorganization. The New Deal came, a hopeful compromise between rich and poor, between past and future. The wish dreams of the robbed majority had to make their new deal, too. So had the talking picture. It attacked the social problems with all the diplomacy of clever showmanship. An ingenious showman who died too young, Irving Thalberg, a man of suave manners but of ruthless ambition, introduced, into his society melodramas some criticism of manners, depicting the decom-

position of the old solidity, the dissolution of puritanism, thus bringing some novelty and variety into old plots and a more modern finish to acting. Another young producer, Darryl Zanuck, inaugurated a new type of reportage in pictures like 'Five Star Finals' and others, making a few interesting films for Warner Brothers until he decided to make, as head of the firm, millions for Fox, re-named 'Twentieth Century' without so far justifying the new name sufficiently. A short and soon receding wave of realism X-rayed the life of our time in newspaper offices (Ben Hecht and MacArthur's very vivid 'Front Page,' directed by Milestone, well known since his silent epic, 'All Quiet on the Western Front'), prisons, chain gangs, in the slums of New York, and even in the political administration; they mostly followed with more or less cheap modifications, successful stage plays and were originally not conceived for the screen. The lack of independent film writers using a medium for the purpose of their own ideas, became more and more obvious. In literature there has been a wave of historical biographies and novels mostly trying to see the past with half-romanticizing, half-critical eyes, to explain the present and to give utopian outlines of the future. An attempt to escape through the back door of history. Therefore a revival of historical films in the programme of talking pictures.

It is not so easy to teach Americans European history and make them see the point. They are snobs so far as our kings and queens are concerned, and want them romantic and showy. If one debunks this illusion, kings seen realistically with American eyes look like bosses of big firms, and loyal audiences resent it when they abdicate. Before the crisis it would not have been so easy to sell to a producer 'Queen Christina.' Salka Viertel tried to make of the enlightened woman who refused to keep her throne an after-war pacifist, and at the same time to create a part for Greta Garbo, that would give a higher meaning to the type of a spiritualized vamp. And in 'Marie Walewska' Garbo was supposed to be the good conscience of Napoleon, tragically unable to stop his downfall into tyranny and destruction. But this attempt came already at a time when the theme of a dictator punished by fate was quite a daring subject for an industry that wants to avoid trouble in its far-flung market at any price. And historical pictures which force their makers to take a side were suddenly at an end.

Preaching an idea and proclaiming liberal convictions do not make, for themselves, effective and popular pictures. More than in melodramas and historical pictures the crisis became productive in the so-called 'crazy comedies'; they dealt with the craziness of a world in which American audiences had so far utterly believed. At the begin-

ning of this most significant series stand Capra-Riskin's masterpieces. They were filmed fairy tales from everyday life where it starts to be a modern life. The pursuit of Happiness, in these really charming caprices of an entertaining fancy did not indulge in sex and was not to be satisfied by money. Imagination and the heart were the aim, reached with a half-whimsical, half-satirical smile. Imagination and the heart drove 'Mr. Deeds' (a Parsifal of the provinces, who had to go 'to town' in order to spend an inheritance) to his attempt to solve the social question in a practical socialist way. An amiably sincere, but naïve attempt that ends well, without doing any damage—meaning, that it is given up before serious trouble starts. Between the dreams of Mr. Deeds and deeds lies an abyss of reality. Gary Cooper won everybody's sympathies as a socially conscious fairy prince, 'translated' (as Shakespeare says) into a country yokel. He could not have done so before the crisis. In Capra's poetic comedies one saw the most delicate acting Hollywood had perhaps ever seen. Overwhelmed by success, Capra wanted to expand his preaching to epic dimensions, and with 'Lost Horizon' he definitely lost his horizon. Shagri-la became an appalling portrait of Hollywood at its worst. To escape there from our actual problems—no Hindu could really mean it, if not a Hollywood-Hindu. The crazy comedies that now followed were not as crazy as the people they put on the screen. They revealed the private and official life of plutocratic families as a sheer madhouse. Money and the power that big money gives, had perturbed the mind of these poor rich men and women, still enviable enough in their folly to tickle the organ that produces wish dreams. Their madness made the cynicism of these people who had been the architects of the big crash more forgivable. In 'My Man Godfrey' (director, La Cava) members of the 'fast set' try to overcome the boredom of their empty lives by playing an amusing game: everybody had to bring home the most interesting and queer object he finds on his way. The silly rich heiress (how sweet in her silliness!) brought something fabulously queer and strange with her—an unemployed workman. He, after a whirlpool of funny situations, turned out to be a disguised millionaire (who longed, in an up-to-date Byronesque manner, out of desperation, to try the life of a workman), and so the end was happy, as marriage in films always seems to be (if it stands at the end of a picture). It was a revelation how the stars of Hollywood became at once most convincingly natural and human when they were allowed to play complete fools and not the kind who pretend to reason.

Among the actors of this period there are many good ones who came from the stage. To name some of them: Frederick March, Miriam

Hopkins, Paul Muni, Charles Laughton, Leslie Howard, Helen Hayes, Edward Robinson, Charles Boyer, and many others; not all of them stayed, not all of them became prominent the way film stars have to be prominent, their private ego becoming identified with a specialization in their trade. The greater they are the less they play a character, they are supposed to be what they appear. Of the directors who adapted their theatrical style successfully to picture conditions and developed the new possibilities of the talking screen were artists like Cukor, Wyler and Ruben Mamoulian. But have they yet established a form comparable in greatness and originality to the epics of the silent days? Naturalistic comedies from the life of fishermen or of provincial town folk ('Ah! Wilderness,' by O'Neill and Clarence Brown) or romantic operettas (some of the most charming ones done by Lubitsch and by Mamoulian, fantastic and novel, in the use of the camera, in bringing songs to a moving picture-liveliness): in such narrow or playful forms talking pictures were at their best. The question arises: can epics be done without positiveness, without a creed, an optimistic outlook? King Vidor tried to create the epic of the negroes of the South: 'Hallelujah.' It was colourful, not only because it dealt with coloured people. It was rich in feeling; a strong human appeal radiated from the artist's love for a humiliated race that endures its fate with a touching passivity. The crying of the dark people was as harmonious as their singing; sounds everywhere, in the cotton fields, sounds of nature, of the whip, of carriage wheels. It was an elegy of deeply musical, very melancholy beauty. Because there was no fight in the picture, no aim, it could not be a great success. 'Good Earth,' China, seen through the eyes of Hollywood, was a much bigger success. It had epical quality, too, but less artistic truth. Again passive people, but they struggle on. Not the modern, the fighting China—the ups and downs of small folks who are young and grow old, who are poor, get rich, poor again. Famine, epidemics, the plague of insects as in the Bible; pious apathy, the humble earth. A quieting effect. From far away resounds the revolution, breaks in; passes by, like everything else. The wave of life sentimentalized. 'Mutiny on the Bounty' was the late Thalberg's greatest talking picture success. A true story, a revolutionary episode from the life of English sailors. But this captain was an individual nightmare, a pathological case, not the representation of a system. This made the whole attempt insignificant, in spite of excellent sea vistas and Charles Laughton. This actor is frightening when he displays the demonic forces that are hidden in a bourgeois type. He created, in 'Ruggles of Red Gap' an English butler who represented his class and was a monster of servility. As a sea monster, a

sadistic-commander of men he lacked strength and the convincing brutality of the type. And the South Sea sequences were a stage affair with the quality of a pantomime, a ridiculous impromptu. Sacrilege to think of Robert Flaherty's or Murnau's South Sea in the silent days. I give this picture so much space because of its popular appeal and because it could be called the 'Potemkin' of Hollywood.

Popular appeal is necessary to assign to an epic its rank. But popular appeal alone makes no epic. 'San Francisco' (performed with the excellent craftsmanship of the director Van Dyk) had an epic theme: the earthquake and its consequences. It had a very effective earthquake, too. But never mind the consequences, and let us forget the reasons. To explain a catastrophe of nature by the nature of the San Francisco night life, that is very cheap magazine stuff indeed. Still, this picture, too, was a child of the crisis. The mood of religious redemption after a crash had its special effect on contemporary audiences all over the world, even in Nazi Germany. But we must dig deeper to reach the roots of our sinfulness.

Getting at the roots! This intention characterizes the Hollywood experiments of Fritz Lang, a foremost German director of the silent days, now in emigration. As soon as he had learnt sufficient English he attacked, with his violent grip, American social problems. 'Fury,' a lynching picture, was an outstanding and courageous effort to give a warning example of fascist psychology. What causes the middle-class fury, how does it originate and rise? The picture had style and great moments. It had no basis wide enough to tell the tale of our time. The story was manufactured.

Who will find the story to tell us on the screen what shakes our very existence? And if the story, representing our needs and hopes is found, would one be allowed to make the picture in a medium of so far-reaching influence, a medium that has become a part of public life? Is it not the job and standard of Hollywood to avoid the issue? Is not Big Money, invested in pictures, one international family, by inter-marriage, that does not allow wars of principles between its members?

But there is, evidently, a wave of social reorganization, a new consciousness streaming through the public life of the States since the crash. Not only a critical attitude has arisen but impulses of activity, by which the Roosevelt government is being carried. The spirit and the achievements of the New Deal, a more or less clearly defined revival of old and new democratic ideas and ideals against plutocracy, trying to solve the problems not radically but in a liberal way. Of the above analysed films, 'Mr. Deeds,' 'Fury,' and others,



tesy of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

Luise Rainer in 'The Good Earth.'

not mentioned because (like 'Gabriel of the White House') their criticism concerned the inner life, the administration, special political and social conditions of the States, none could have been conceived before 1929. Even the gangster films show this new turn, the G-men-ideology, the clearance of corruption, a certain anti-swamp-mindedness. (The end of Prohibition caused so amusing a comedy as 'A Slight Case of Murder' which laughs at the good old gangster-hero and unmasks his vulgarity, his burning ambition to enter legitimately the middle classes.) The debunking quality of talking pictures is thus proved. The positive line that we are looking for, the affirmative side has perhaps its strongest symptoms yet in two pictures by Dieterle-Muni, produced for Warner Brothers. Dieterle, the director, and Muni the actor, united their efforts in search for the modern hero. The result was their 'Pasteur,' the epic of the scientist which I am sorry to have missed. The theme was inaugurated before in John Ford's 'Arrowsmith,' after Sinclair Lewis's famous novel; an extremely decent piece of work, but taking from the book (the epic of a physician's research-life) only the more pictorial facts. Arrowsmith altruistically fighting epidemics in the jungles—and doing it less melodramatically than in other pictures of the kind. 'Pasteur'—the man and his life is a great historical example of reason against prejudice and superstition. It is heroism in modern prose. Stupidity is the arch-public enemy, the 'heavy' in this story. 'Zola'—the film I saw—has, as theme, an even greater and a clearly political significance. A case from yesterday that gains a new meaning and importance to-day. A battle for justice fought by one single man against a ruling clique, against his whole country. Anti-semitism used as a screen behind which reactionary interests operate. Corruption as social career. The film, as far as it portrays the life of a great writer, tells its tale in the simplifying technique of a picture book but with glamour and emotional fulness. A dry and manly humour makes Muni's characterization lively and brings it up to convincing maturity. How the 'affair' moves on, within the conscience of the man Zola and brings movement into the machinery of the society and of the picture, reaching a glorious climax during the great trial: here, if anywhere, is a new pathos, the sweeping power of the epic of our time. The picture proves the fighting spirit which should have been evoked in democratic countries as a natural reaction to fascist aggressiveness. Out of the fight for human rights against a corrupt military class and against race hatred it made a world-wide popular success. And it found in the fighter for these rights a hero who can be loved and admired full-heartedly behind the Spanish front as well as in London and in Paris. This picture broke

the isolation of Hollywood and united the United States of America with the rest of the world that is involved in a bitter struggle for the very existence of civilization. It brought the most progressive point of American film-making in one line with Renoir's 'La Grande Illusion,' seeing the World War through the eyes of to-day (revealing all bravado of soldiery as tragic madness if not employed in the service of Freedom) and with 'The Thirteen,' an epic, reviving the real heroism of the Civil War in Russia. To express the fundamental spirit that gives this world-struggle for freedom its meaning, its hope, its light in the depths of the time: that is the rare and exemplary value of the talking picture 'Zola.'

Pictures, silent or talking, to be effective, to reach the summit of expression, must sweep the heights and depths of human experience. Even talking pictures are made of celluloid and more so of hero worship and wish dreaming. Every epoch has its burning wishes and its autonomous heroes. Not to avoid them, to own up to them, to dare to recognize them: Hollywood will itself decide for progressive idealism or become a stronghold of reactionary forces, which have to be swept away by the march of time. 'The March of Time': the staged news of to-day. The technique using this name tries to keep step with the avalanche of events. If I compare such newsreels, their dynamic fulness, their propagandist importance with the Fox Movietone of ten years ago and their authentic, but trifling stuff, I can best see what this short period has done to the world, to us and even to the sounding and resounding screen.

DESMOND CLARKE

HUNGER

SHE got out of the bed very slowly, carefully, and made as little noise as possible. She stood shivering for a while till her bare feet became accustomed to the cold flagstones.

Her nightdress, worn thin and unwashed, stretched tightly across her swollen belly accentuating its great size.

One of the children stirred noisily at the foot of the bed and cried *Mammy, Mammy* in a weak pettish voice. She turned vaguely to where the three children lay side by side at the foot of the bed beneath a pile of nondescript covering, and then picking up some clothes began to dress slowly and laboriously.

She did not wash herself or comb her tossed hair, but passed her hand wearily over her face, and pushed back the tousled hair from her eyes and forehead.

She was young, a woman in the early thirties, but her face was deeply lined, and black shadows held her lustreless eyes like dim pools in deep dark wells.

‘Mammy, mammy,’ the pettish voice cried again.

She sighed, turned from the bed and went slowly to the kitchen that was cold and cheerless, austere in its frugality. She stood by the empty grate for a moment, and then packed it with tightly folded papers and some twigs, and put a match to it. It began to light slowly, and she filled a kettle and put it on to boil.

She sat on an upturned box by the fire and fed it with bits of twigs, wood cuttings, fragments of brown paper, and an occasional piece of half burnt coal.

While she tended the fire mechanically with one hand she rested her head in the cupped palm of the other and stared at the bright flames vaguely, dreamily.

When the kettle boiled she poured out a mug full of water and sipped it very slowly. The first few sips made her feel somewhat sickish and she belched a little wind, but when the warm water pulsed through her body she felt better, and as she sipped the water slowly a pleasant sensation of drowsiness came over her, and she felt comfortable, satisfied.

The plaintive cry from the bedroom flowed indistinctly through her

mind. It pained her and hurt and she would have liked to shut it from her mind, but no drowsiness could quite still it or immune her. Poor Michael, she thought, only a wee scrap, but what could she do for him. He had cried and whimpered since the day he was born. At first the weak piteous cry worried and upset her and she petted and mothered him, then as he got older her patience gave way and she scolded and beat him, and in the end she became resigned—the resignation of despair—and didn't mind very much whether he cried or not.

She stirred herself and shivered involuntarily. The bed creaked noisily in the other room. Instinctively she knew that Michael was struggling, trying in his puny way to get out of the bed. He wouldn't be able to get out though, but he would waken the other children and she didn't want him to do that. They were happy in their sleep; it was good for them, it was the only thing they had.

‘Will you take the child out, Maggie?’ came the cross voice of her half asleep husband.

She raised her head and looked towards the door. Her face hardened and tears filled her eyes. She chided herself for crying. Something had come over her and tears came easily, far too easily. O, if he could only understand! If he would only keep the child for a little while and leave her in peace. If only he would help her, take some of her burden from her she would not cry, tears would not cloud her eyes. He would not take Michael and nurse the child for a few moments. No, he only thought of comfort, his own comfort, so like a man.

She wanted to hate him, but she couldn't. He was inconsiderate though, selfish as well. He didn't care about the children; he didn't seem to realize that she had them all day long, dragging out of her skirt from morning till night; whimpering and crying, looking at her with pale pleading face, dim lustreless eyes—asking, begging, crying for something to eat, something to eat.

Couldn't he help her? Couldn't he take Michael in his arms, soothe him, nurse him, and leave her just a few moments of peace, a few moments with her own thoughts, her vague dreams, and her unborn child. No, no, he wouldn't! He never thought of her, never . . . except the one way, the one way . . . !

‘Take the child out, will you?’ he called again, in a more wakeful voice.

She stood up slowly and clutched her side where she felt a sharp stabbing pain. She had to remain standing still for a moment or two while the pain subsided, and then she went into the room and

took the whimpering child from the end of the bed. The two other children stirred, and their father turned noisily towards the wall.

'You don't want the others to start, do you?' he asked testily.

She just tossed her head, and pressed the child to her breast. He was cold, and the thin weak body shivered spasmodically in her arms. She dressed him quickly, sitting on the side of the bed, but he kept crying and calling *Mammy*. She soothed him gently. 'What is it, my pet?' she kept whispering, her mouth close to his ear.

'Hungry, mammy. Hungry, mammy,' he whimpered.

She put him down on the floor, but his thin curved legs were unable to support him and he flopped helplessly beside her. He was a youngster of three, but looked more like an unweaned infant with a great bulbous head and a big protuberant belly. He began to cry somewhat louder, and fearful that he might waken the other children she picked him up and carried him to the kitchen.

She sat with him on her knee in front of the fire, and poured some more hot water into her mug.

'Me, Mammy, me,' the child cried, his hands clutching greedily for the mug.

She began blowing on the hot water and swilling it round the mug. When the water had cooled sufficiently she held the mug to his mouth. He gulped the water noisily, clasping her hands in his, then he spat the water out as though it was some nasty medicine. She pressed the mug to his lips, and held his head in the palm of her hand. He tried to twist his head away, and commenced kicking and waving his hands, spluttering and spilling the water on himself.

'No, no!' he cried, pushing the mug away, and burying his face in her breast.

'O, drink it, can't you. It's nice, very nice,' she coaxed and pleaded with him.

'No, no!' He commenced fighting and spluttering again.

She took the mug away from him. 'Look, it's all right, it's very nice,' she said. 'Look, look at *Mammy* drinking it. *Mammy* likes it.' She sipped the warm water slowly. 'Now,' she said, holding the mug to his mouth, 'that's a good boy. Come on, a big drink.'

'No, no!' he cried, squirming on her knee, and waving his hands frantically. He struck the mug, and it fell and broke in small pieces on the stone floor.

She swung the child roughly to the ground by one arm, and beat him impatiently on the legs and reddened buttocks. He rolled, kicked, and screamed, and clawed the floor impotently.

She closed her eyes in pain for an instant, then a great flood of

pity surged through her body. Tears started from her eyes, and a horrid lump rose in her throat and choked her. She tried to cry out to beg, plead, ask forgiveness, but she could not. Quickly she dropped on her knees, gathered the child fiercely to her breast, and began swaying gently from side to side.

'Sssh,' she soothed nervously, pressing the child's face to her cheek, and patting the fair head of matted, unkempt, hair.

'Hush, hush,' she whispered, rising from her knees. 'Hush, Mammy will get you something, Mammy will get you something, something nice. That's a good boy now. Mammy's little darling. Now, now, Mammy didn't mean to hurt you; really she didn't. Mammy was a bold bad Mammy. No, now.'

She rubbed the red marked legs gently as she swayed to and fro. The child cried and sobbed inconsolably.

The children were moving in the bedroom. She redoubled her efforts to quieten the child but it was too late.

'What the hell's all this about?' her husband asked, striding into the kitchen with only his shirt on him.

'Nothing,' she said, rocking the child in her arms.

'A funny looking nothing,' he said sourly. 'A kid doesn't cry for nothing. There you have him bawling for the past half hour, and nobody able to get a wink of sleep.'

'You're badly off for sleep,' she told him, 'badly off indeed! Do you ever think of me, and my sleep,' she cried, her cheeks gathering colour with her rising temper.

'No need to go off the deep end,' he admonished, shaking his hand like the flap of a bird's wing.

'I'm not going off the deep end,' she cried. 'It's you are, you started it. You can't think of anything, anything but yourself. Self, self all the time. If you'd only do something. Work! Anything!'

He looked at her and scowled evilly. 'Don't I try to get work, any sort of work,' he shouted back. 'You'd think I never tried the way you talk. Work isn't picked up on the street as easy as all that. You know it isn't as well as I do, yet you throw it at me every day as if I was a lazy, idle, loafer, as if I didn't care, didn't even try.'

'I don't throw it at you,' she cried in a louder voice, 'I don't. You know I don't. It's just the way you pick on everything I say. That's it! That's it!'

The crying and moaning of Michael, the louder heated voices of the parents awakened the other children. They came into the kitchen carrying their clothes under their arms. They stood shivering in the cold, staring at their parents wide-eyed.

The eldest child, a gaunt thin-legged girl of twelve with tiny breasts rising from her hollow chest, was on the verge of tears. She stared at her mother vaguely, foolishly, as though her mental faculties were not functioning very clearly. Her brother, on the other hand, had a cold almost cat-like stare, and his wizened pock-marked face bore an ill-tempered scowl.

‘Look what you’ve done now,’ the father said, jerking his head in the direction of the children, and returning to the bedroom.

The mother looked down at the floor shamefacedly as though she was guilty of some horrible crime before the children. The child in her arms had ceased crying but every now and then his body started convulsively when he sobbed. From his perch in her arms he surveyed the two other children, his mouth hanging open.

‘Dress yourselves,’ she told them, brushing a tear from the side of her eye. The little girl began to dress herself slowly in front of the fire, but her brother stood for a long time clutching his clothes and staring at his mother.

‘Get into your clothes, Johnny,’ she said a little sharply. ‘You don’t want to get a cold, do you?’

The boy looked at her sullenly and made no effort to dress himself.

‘Can’t you do what you’re told,’ she said, ‘I’ve enough to do without having to nurse you. Hurry up, now.’ She shook him by the shoulder, but he moved away from her.

‘Come on now, none of your boldness here,’ she warned him, striking him on the cheek with the back of her hand.

‘Don’t! Don’t!’ he cried.

She slapped him again. ‘Come on, hurry up,’ she said.

He cried out loudly.

‘Leave the boy alone for heaven’s sake,’ his father shouted, coming back into the kitchen, and then returning to the bedroom.

‘Well, you’d better look after him if he catches a cold,’ she said turning away. She handed the infant to her daughter who had finished dressing, and heaped more sticks on the fire. When the kettle boiled she took a pinch of tea from a small paper bag on the window and dropped it into the kettle, and then added a little condensed milk to it; she waited for a second or two, and taking the lid off the kettle stirred the milked tea vigorously with a stick. She poured out four full mugs of tea, and cut a loaf in five parts, giving the three larger pieces to her husband and the two children, and keeping the two small pieces for herself and the infant.

Her husband came into the kitchen and pulled a chair over to the table; he commenced to drink his tea slowly. The two children dipped

their slices of dry bread in their mugs of tea and then ate them ravenously, wolfing large bites and swallowing them in lumps.

She broke little pieces from her slice and nibbled them cheerlessly, she dipped the infant's bread in her tea, and held it patiently to his mouth. He did not seem to care for it very much, he often chewed it and then spat it out; he drank her tea noisily though, spluttering into the mug and dribbling the tea down his chin. Her husband drained his mug and pushed it away from him; his slice of bread lay uneaten on the table, and he stared through the dirty window in a vague, hopeless manner. The two children eyed his slice of bread like watching cats, both their hands spread out on the table towards it, but neither brave enough to grab it. They sipped their tea slowly, peering anxiously over their mugs; they harboured the last drops in anticipation of an extra piece of bread.

Their father got up slowly, leant over the table and peered through the window with narrowed eyes; he could see the entrance to the harbour in the distance, but he did not see any fishing drifters lying against the pier; there were black jets of smoke standing dimly against the grey clouded sky which meant that the boats might be coming in. He rubbed the back of his hand across his mouth and went back to the bedroom.

The two children, seeing their father leaving, grabbed for the piece of bread, but their mother had taken it before them; she broke the slice in two, however, and gave them each a piece. For a moment she watched them, fascinated by the wolfish savagery with which they devoured the bread. She wondered how they could eat it, for it was fresh and doughy, and seemed to stick somewhere in her chest in hard thick balls. When they finished the slice she looked down at the table, afraid to watch them now that they had eaten it all.

'I want more,' the girl said pettishly.

Her mother shook her head. 'There's no more,' she said simply. 'You've got all there is.'

'No more?' The boy looked at her hard. There was a note of discord in his hard, rasping, little voice as though he did not believe his mother. He did not believe her really, because she always lied about food—she always said there was nothing, and he knew she would have a loaf of bread hidden somewhere; or maybe some herrings that she got from the boats, or some lights or pluck she'd have got from the butcher. She always had something hidden away, and she wouldn't give it to them. He looked at her again, but she turned away from the eyes that always seemed to suspect her, that taunted her at every turn. She couldn't bear to look at him.

'I want more,' he muttered sourly. 'I'm hungry, so I am.' He began to hammer on the table with his mug.

'Stop that, Johnny,' she ordered, slapping the table with her open hand. 'You can't have more bread.' Then she added more gently, 'You've had it all. If I had any more I'd give it to you. Yes, gladly.' She turned to the infant and fed him the last morsel of bread, and let him drain her jug.

'No more, Mummy?' the girl asked again, resting her head on her hand.

She shook her head wearily and turned towards her husband as he entered the kitchen. 'Going out?' she asked, hoping that he would stay and mind the children while she went down to the harbour to get some fish.

'Yeh,' he muttered, picking a muffler from behind the door and tying it roughly round his neck. He opened the door and met the full force of the strong wind that was blowing in; he haunched his shoulders as the cold blast pierced his thin clothes and chilled his body, and bending his head well down he stepped out, pulling the door behind him.

She watched him through the window as he walked along towards the quays, his head bent down and a great hump on his back. She watched him till he was lost in the distance, and could not be discerned from the odd assortment of derelict things which lay about. She watched him go off each morning in that vague, aimless manner of his. He wasn't going looking for a job; no, she knew that he had given that up long ago as hopeless, and so it was; there were thousands looking for jobs, and there weren't any jobs, not even for one of them. Still, he went out and stayed out; possibly he enjoyed being out, even in the cold; chances were he managed to scrounge a drink or two at the White Anchor from some of his pals who still held on to a job, or were flush because of a lucky double, or luckier treble, or a flash in a football pool. But he went out, stayed out all day; it was something for him, he was away from the kids, away from all the noise and crying, the eternal whining and begging, the pinched thin faces, the open hungry mouths. Men were lucky, she thought grimly, they had nothing much to worry about; kids just came somehow, sort of dropped out of the sky for all they knew, sometimes they lived, more often as not they died, and that was all. Men just didn't seem to care, they were only upset if they were kept awake at night, or couldn't read the paper in peace; they hadn't to bear the pain and agony of childbirth, if they did it might have been a different story, they'd take jolly good care they didn't come often, and they wouldn't be so keen

on having their rights. Their rights! she thought again, a sardonic smile on her face. Their rights! She laughed out aloud, a harsh, bitter, laugh. The children looked at her, a frightened, puzzled expression on their upturned faces. She looked strange to them, sounded strange, like. . . .

Her expression became serious. She turned towards the children, her brow wrinkled slightly. She studied the little pinched faces, the dull lustreless eyes that stared at her in blank, wondering amazement. The girl began to cry softly. She was frightened. The young infant commenced to whimper again, and struggle and wriggle in its mother's arms as though it was in pain.

'There now, there now,' she soothed gently, rubbing the large distended stomach with her thin rough hand. 'What's wrong with you, Mary?' she asked, turning to the girl.

'I'm hungry,' the child cried.

'I know dear, but Mammy will get you something, something nice for dinner.' She sucked her lips, and swallowed the hard lump that seemed to stick in her throat and choke her. She thought of what she said, something nice for dinner, and frowned. Oh, how often had she promised something nice! Funny how they seemed to think that she could perform miracles, bring loaves and fishes from nothing; make a little—how little—feed so many hungry people. She smiled bitterly as she looked out of the window again and saw the wrecked world about her. Derelict factories rose grimly to her left, with large chimneys reaching to the sky, smokeless and dead, like gaunt spectres towering mournfully over the town. Down in the near harbour great ships and boats lay tilted on their sides, half covered with water and sea wreck, others propped against the quayside too weak to break or stray from their rusted moorings. A low rumbling sound, like people dragging their feet, disturbed her thoughts. She saw the head of the procession pass the window, and she turned away.

'Look, look, Mummy,' Mary cried excitedly, forgetting her hunger, and standing up on her chair to get closer to the window.

'That's Tim Mackay,' Johnny volunteered without interest. 'He was bad yesterday 'cos I seen the doctor going in. Not much of a funeral, only a wooden box.'

Young Mackay! God! She gathered the whimpering infant fiercely in her arms, and pressed him closely to her bosom. The child was cold, and she tried to cover it with her open hands. She gripped him with terrible tension, pressed her face against the child's head, hugged and held it fiercely as though somebody was trying to take him from her arms.

When she relaxed her arms she felt limp and exhausted. She got up from her chair and carried the child into the bedroom. She rubbed the little, ugly body vigorously till she got tired, and her back pained her. She straightened herself slowly, picked a shawl from the bed, drew it tightly across her head and shoulders and went into the kitchen.

‘Are you going out?’ Mary asked.

She nodded.

‘Bring me.’

‘No, I won’t be long. You’ll want to mind Michael till I come back. Won’t you?’

‘Yeh.’

‘An’ don’t be long,’ Johnny interposed, picking his nose and putting his finger in his mouth, ‘cos I’m hungry.’

She opened the door and looked up the street; she was glad that the funeral procession had passed, she didn’t want to meet the mourners, because she had not even called upon them, though they were neighbours. She stood for a moment looking down the river towards the mouth of the harbour. Away in the distance she could see the fishing drifters with thick black smoke blowing lustily from their dimmed funnels, and mingling with the dull grey clouds drifting quickly overhead.

As she walked along the narrow pathway outside the houses, she began to wonder why all the doors were shut, and nobody seemed to be moving about; usually she had one or two neighbours with her. Perhaps she was late and they had all gone down to the harbour to await the arrival of the boats. But, she reminded herself, there was no need to hurry, catches were exceptionally heavy, and the fishermen said there were too many fish though she found that hard to believe. Still, it wouldn’t do to be late. She tried to walk quickly but her heavy body was far too much for her legs, she felt weak and faint. She walked along the quayside slowly, it was rough, and she had to step over rusted hawsers, disused anchors, and broken tumbrels. A few men lounged about the empty sheds, chewing and spitting. They didn’t take any notice of her, though she felt that they were staring at her and making remarks; she never felt so conscious of her great size, and her lumbering gait. When she passed them she glanced back, furtively, but they were not looking at her. Beyond the tumble-down warehouses, from which the doors, windows, and some of the great beams had been torn for winter firing, lay the outer harbour, once a hub of industry but now used by the small fishing fleet and an odd collier seeking shelter from the winter gales and seas. Packing

sheds had been erected on the wharf, with long trough-like tables, and stacks of barrels and boxes piled high upon each other. The harbour was dull and lifeless like an abandoned hulk. She noticed the lifelessness, she saw that the curing girls were not waiting for the boats to come in; she missed their banter and cross-talk. Their absence was unusual and inexplicable. A few women stood in the sheds, shielding themselves as best they could from the biting wind that came coldly from the sea.

She nodded to a neighbour here and there. She knew most of the women but they rarely spoke to each other, except for commonplace remarks on the weather. The women wore shawls about their heads and shoulders, only their pale pinched faces showing beneath them. They swayed about unsteadily, moving from one foot to the other, and blowing on their cold numbed hands.

Some distance out the drifters lay rolling in the rough sea; and, in the nearer boats, men could be seen dragging heavy laden nets. The dark boats looked like strange monsters rising and falling in the trough of the waves. The watchers wondered when the boats would come in. After some time smoke began to rise from the sluggish funnels, and the shriek of sirens rose above the wind, and the boats began to move slowly out to sea. Those in the distance were soon swallowed up by the horizon, and the faint jets of smoke, rising upwards, mingled with the clouds hanging overhead like great bellying sails.

The waiting women looked at one another; pain, anger, and disappointment, written on every line of their pinched, weather-beaten faces. The dull murmur of their voices grew in volume until it growled and snarled in the whistling wind. They moved together, desperately, to the salesmen's office at the back of the curing sheds. For a moment they stood dumb and impotent, then one of the women rattled gently with her bare knuckles on the small sliding door let into the wall; her knocking grew in intensity, and the door slid open like the small window of a confessional. A man's face was framed in the opening, he looked quickly from one face to another; they crowded upon him, shouting and gesticulating. He seemed surprised, even frightened, so he closed the door hurriedly. The women commenced kicking and hammering the wall and door wildly, and calling out *Mister! Mister!* in pained, pleading voice. 'Are the boats coming in?', 'Are they coming, *Mister?*' 'Are they?' 'Aw *Mister! Mister!*'

'No! No!' came the muffled answer from the frightened clerk.

The women moved slowly over to the water's edge and gazed

despairingly out to sea, but the waves only rolled, dullish green, where the boats had been.

She remained behind, and knocked gently, hopefully, on the door. 'Mister, Mister,' she whispered weakly.

The little door slid open again and the head appeared, glancing nervously about. 'I told you no,' he said with marked emphasis.

'Yes, yes,' she stammered. 'But, but when are they coming back? When . . . ?'

He looked at her narrowly; he was a rough well-fed fellow used to dealing with all sorts of people, fishermen, buyers, curers, and beggars.

'Don't know,' he said gruffly, starting to close the door.

'To-day?' she asked.

He shook his head and haunched his shoulders. 'Couldn't tell,' he said, closing the door a little more. 'No good bringing 'em in. . . . No market for 'em. . . . Have to pitch 'em back. . . . See.' He closed the door sharply.

She turned away from the window, scarcely hearing what he said. She walked slowly, drunkenly back, and the other women followed her with bent heads.

H. A. CARTER

SATURDAY NIGHT

JIM RATCLIFFE and his pal David Fowkes got to their feet as the face of the King flashed on the screen and the National Anthem blared from the radio-gramophone in the orchestra pit. They pushed among the crowd making for the exit. Eventually they were in the narrow corridor leading out to the street. On the pavement they stopped and breathed in the cold air.

‘God it was warm wasn’t it?’ said Jim, puffing and blowing.

‘Aye,’ said Dave.

‘Shall we go to the Savoy and have some chips?’

‘No. Let’s have a walk round and see if we can see anybody.’

They walked slowly along. Jim had his hands deep in his pockets and slouched along, peering out of the corners of his eyes, remembering the gangster picture he had just seen. Edward G. Robinson was one of his favourites and he imagined himself sitting at a *café* table and suddenly from a sitting position knocking out a rival gangster as Robinson had done.

The streets were dark except for the lamps, and they passed youths walking in groups or standing on the kerb talking to girls. In the shop doorways couples were giggling and struggling.

At the bottom of Oxford Street two girls stood. Dave nudged Jim.

‘Take it easy, Jim.’

They slowed down and stopped in front of the girls.

‘Hello Lil,’ said Dave.

‘Hello Dave. Been to the Hippodrome?’

‘Yes. Have you?’

‘No. I’ve been home and just come up for a walk.’

‘How’s Woolworth’s going on? Have you sold out?’

‘Has the sea run dry?’

‘Come and have a fish and mixed.’

‘What do you take us for? There’s only a lot of drunken devils in chip shops at this time of night.’

‘Well, you should know. All right, then. Let’s get a move on else the cop’ll be after us.’

They walked on and Jim found himself walking with the other girl.

‘Do you work at Woolworth’s?’

‘Only Friday nights and Saturday nights.’

‘Is that all you do?’

‘I work at the factory as well.’

‘What, and then tie yourself up on Saturday nights! You must be making some money. What is it—bottom drawer?’

‘Might be. I’m getting married next Easter.’

‘Yes. And I’m going to be King of England next Christmas.’

The girl laughed. ‘Where do you work?’

‘Bradley Pit.’

Dave and Lil stood waiting for them.

‘I’m going home, Winnie.’

‘What, now?’

‘Yes. Dave’s taking me down.’

‘I’ll bet they’re going round by the hospital,’ said Jim.

Winnie punched him in the ribs. ‘Wise guy, aren’t you.’

‘Well, come on Lil. See you to-morrow dinner-time, Jim.’

‘O.K. Be careful.’

Jim and Winnie watched the other two walk away.

‘I didn’t know Dave knew Lil,’ Jim said.

‘She met him last Wednesday night.’

‘Shall we have a walk? What about going down Newlands?’

‘Oh no. It’s too late. I shall have to be going home.’

‘All right then. Where do you live?’

‘Down Chapel Street.’

‘I’ll go down with you then and meet the old man.’

Winnie laughed. ‘And then you wake up. He’d kill me.’

‘Well, come on then.’

Winnie put her arm in his and he hugged her to him. She was evidently well-known, for several youths called out as they walked by, and Winnie called over her shoulder to them.

‘Tell him to keep his hands in his pockets, Win,’ one youth cried.

Winnie laughed and squeezed Jim’s hand.

‘They all seem to know you,’ Jim said.

Winnie pouted and shrugged her shoulders. ‘Oh, a lot of them come into the shop and want me to meet them outside. Don’t take any notice of them. They’re only showing off.’

They crossed the road at the bottom of Church Street, and turned down Chapel Street. It was darker than in the main streets. Jim slipped his arm round Winnie’s waist, and turning his head brushed her cheek with his lips. She moved her face round and kissed him lightly on the mouth. They passed the Wesleyan Chapel and a garage. Winnie stopped.

'Don't come any farther. My dad might be looking out for me.'
'Don't be silly.' He urged her on.
'Where do you live?'

'Just here,' she whispered. They were in front of a terrace of four houses. Access to the backs was through a wide archway in the middle over which one of the houses had two bedrooms.

Winnie stopped and released herself from Jim's arms. She leaned on the angle of the front garden wall. Jim stood in front of her. The street lamp nearby went out.

'Eleven o'clock,' Winnie whispered.

Jim moved forward and put both arms round her. She turned her head away but Jim put his hand up to her cheek and pushed her face round until he could kiss her. She gave him her lips and he held her close, straining his body against hers. She dragged her head away breathless. Jim laughed.

'Give over. I shall have to go in. Let me go.'

He let her break away, but caught hold of her arm and followed her into the shadow of the archway. He kissed her again.

'Stop it. You're tearing my coat on the wall.'

'All right. Let me have my back against it.' He swung her round and leaned against the wall. He strained her to him and lifted her feet off the ground. She pushed at him and beat his chest but he would not stop kissing her. They heard a door open at the back of the houses and stood breathless, listening.

'Is that you Winnie?' a woman's voice asked.

'It's mam,' Winnie whispered to Jim. Then she called out, carefully controlling her voice, 'Yes, mam. I shan't be a minute.'

'You'd better not be. Your Dad's waiting for you.'

They heard her footsteps on the yard and the closing of a door.

Winnie kissed Jim and then said, 'I shall have to go in, else Dad won't let me stop out again.'

'All right. When can I see you again?'

'I don't know.'

'Well what about to-morrow night?'

'No. I can't see you to-morrow.'

'Hello. Another boy-friend?'

'What if it is?'

'All right then. What about Tuesday night?'

Winnie thought for a few moments. 'If you like.'

'Shall I meet you outside the Hippodrome?'

'Yes. Just after seven.'

'All right.'

She started to move away. He dragged her back.

‘Wait a minute. Kiss me good-night.’

She clung to him and then pushed him away. ‘Good night,’ she whispered.

‘Good night. Don’t forget Tuesday.’

‘No.’

Jim walked back up Chapel Street and by the front of the Empire Cinema to the bus-station. He lived at a village two miles out of the small town of Bradley. A double-decker bus was in and he climbed upstairs. In a few minutes the bus started. It was crowded. In front four youths were noisily singing, pretending to be drunk. Jim lit a cigarette. The bus stopped and a youth came up the stairs and sat beside Jim.

‘Howdo Jim. Are you going down to the dance to-night?’

‘No bloody fear. I went down last Saturday and there were only a lot of kids there. Are you going?’

‘Aye. I met a nice piece there last Monday and she said she’d be there to-night.’

‘Leaving it a bit late aren’t you. Somebody else’ll have got her by this time.’

‘Well, what by that?’

‘Come on, shift yourself.’

The youth stood up for Jim to get out of the seat. ‘So long, Jim.’

‘Cheero, Ted. Be careful.’

Jim walked slowly from the bus stop and up Mill Road. The houses were in long terraces, the front doors opening straight on to the pavement. He turned down an entry. He opened the kitchen door, hung his coat on a peg and went into the living-room. The table was laid for supper. His mother, a little woman, sat on a stool near the fire.

‘Hello, Mam.’

‘You’re late, aren’t you? Minnie next door went to the pictures and she’s been home half an hour.’

‘I walked home.’

Mrs. Ratcliffe looked at him, and then cut a piece of cheese and put it on his plate. He poured sauce on it and waited whilst his mother cut some bread and butter. ‘What do you want to drink?’

‘Is there any milk?’

‘Yes.’

‘I’ll have a glass.’

When he had everything she sat down on the stool again, dry-washing her hands, tapping a foot impatiently.

'Is Dad back yet?' he asked.

'Of course he isn't,' his mother snapped. She ran on immediately, glad to be given the cue. 'I knew what it would be when he said he'd got a ticket for the Legion dinner. It's only a guzzling match.'

Jim coughed. 'Give him a chance. He may not be as bad as all that.'

His mother glared. 'You mind your own business. I know you stick up for him. I only hope you never follow in his footsteps. If I thought you would I'd sooner kill you.'

'Now, Mam!'

'I would.'

Jim sighed. He got up from the table and switched on the wireless. He whistled in tune with the dance-music and tapped his feet. His mother stared into the fire, her foot still tapping, her mouth working with suppressed anger. Suddenly she stiffened and listened.

'Turn the wireless off.' Jim did not move.

They heard the back door open noisily. It swung back and banged on the draining board. Mrs. Ratcliffe jumped up. Her husband came unsteadily into the doorway and stood, swaying and blinking. He was a tall man, with a long thin face grey with the miner's pallor. He sucked at his heavy ginger moustache. He waved to Jim, and then quickly lowered his hand to clutch the dresser for support.

'You drunken swine.' Mrs. Ratcliffe cried.

Mr. Ratcliffe stiffened, and peered at her. 'Hello, my old duck.'

Mrs. Ratcliffe snorted. 'Take your cap off.'

With a sigh Mr. Ratcliffe put up a hand and fumbled to take off his cap. He removed it, ruffling his hair. He staggered round and went into the kitchen. He was breathing heavily as he hung his cap and coat up. He came back into the room and sat down heavily on a chair. He looked at his wife and then bent down to unlace his boots.

'It's Saturday night again,' said Mrs. Ratcliffe.

'Well, what about it?' Mr. Ratcliffe asked pugnaciously.

'What about it? It'd be a change if you came home on a Saturday night without getting drunk. You're a guzzling hound, that's what you are.'

'Wait a minute,' said Mr. Ratcliffe. He waved a hand to silence her. 'Just because I go out and meet a few pals . . .'

'A fine set of pals. They laugh themselves daft when they get you drunk. It's high time you'd more sense. All you think about's guzzling and swilling and turning the house into a pigsty every weekend.'

'Now listen. I want none of your dam' preaching. Keep your bloody mouth shut,' he shouted.

Nobody spoke for a few moments. Jim leaned over and turned the wireless on louder. 'Turn that bloody thing off,' his father shouted. Jim did not move. Mr. Ratcliffe stood up and came lurching over to him. 'Did you hear what I said. Turn that bloody thing off.'

Mrs. Ratcliffe jumped up and pushed him back until he tumbled into his chair.

'You'd better turn it off, Jim,' she said. Jim angrily stopped the dance music.

'What about some bloody supper?' Mr. Ratcliffe asked.

'There's none for you. I've not started making pig-swill yet.'

Mr. Ratcliffe jumped up again. 'Now look here, Elsie. There's no need for you to talk like that.'

'Well that's all you're fit for. You're just a drunken filthy swine.'

'If you say that again you bloody bitch I'll break your blasted neck.'

'Well that's what you are—a guzzling drunken swine.'

With a bellow Mr. Ratcliffe leaped over and his fist struck her cheek. She stumbled and fell. Jim jumped up, 'Now, Dad,' he began, pushing his father back. 'You as well,' Mr. Ratcliffe shouted. He struck Jim in the chest so that he stumbled against the table, pushing it along the floor. A glass fell and smashed on the floor.

Mr. Ratcliffe stumbled back to his chair and sat down, ruffling his hair and muttering.

Mrs. Ratcliffe stood wiping blood from her check. 'That's the last time you'll do that,' she screamed, thumping the table with her fist. 'You can find one of your fancy pub women to look after you.'

'Oh, bloody well clear off and good riddance,' Mr. Ratcliffe shouted. She ran from the room.

'Now Dad, be careful.'

'Shut your bloody row.'

Jim went out after his mother. She was in the kitchen putting on her hat and coat. 'Where are you off to?'

'I'm going to your Aunt Gladys's,' she sobbed. Jim put on his coat.

Without a word they went out of the house. Mill Road was in pitch darkness. They walked to the bus stop. There was no sign of a bus. They stood without speaking. A group of youths and girls went past coming from the dance.

'Come on back, Mam. Don't be silly.'

Mrs. Ratcliffe began to cry. Jim patted her arm. 'Come on back.

He'll be all right in the morning. Come on. It's nothing. There's no need to let everybody know. You'll get over it and be as right as rain.' He took her arm and urged her away. She let him lead her back.

When they got back to the house, Mr. Ratcliffe lay on the couch fast asleep, snoring. Mrs. Ratcliffe took his boots and put them in the kitchen. Jim put out the light in the living-room and locked the back door and followed his mother upstairs. He went into his room. 'Good night, Mam.'

JIM PHELAN

AMONGST THOSE PRESENT

I

FIVE men sat on a low stone wall. They sat in silence, their feet dangling over a little brook. Their backs were turned to the road, and they looked out over an enormous pasture, bounded by the brook and the wall on which they sat.

The field sloped slightly to the water. A great irregularly shaped pasture, it bore the rich dark-green juicy grass of the Irish cattle-country. At one end, far away up the slope, a small herd of cattle grazed. Twenty or thirty head in all, the smallness of the herd emphasized the lush richness and great size of the pasture.

All the men wore the rough dress of the Irish farm-labourer. Cheap cotton trousers, grey or blue shirts, heavy boots, black slouch hats, made them appear almost uniform, although their ages varied from thirty to sixty. Their faces were placid, bovine, almost expressionless, and each man sucked at a short clay pipe.

All were big men, with hard muscular hands and brown weather-beaten faces. A long lean jaw and large clear eyes were common to all, and there was a strength and suppleness in their bodies, even as they slouched on the wall, smoking in silence.

One of the five, a brown-eyed, black-haired man of thirty or so, raised his head to look at the cattle, then swept his glance across the big field. Still in silence, he settled back into his place on the wall, and spat into the brook. An elderly man at the end of the line coughed, a tiny dry chuckling cough. He, too, spat in the stream, but no one spoke.

It was early evening, in summer. The sun had just gone down, behind a neighbouring mountain. In the fading light, the big field seemed to grow bigger. Between the group of cattle at one end and the group of men at the other, the vastness of the pasture spread and appeared to grow.

Across the field, running up hill, five long straight lines showed faintly in the thick grass. Out of place and useless, in a pasture land, nevertheless the raised lines seemed to interest the men on the wall. From time to time one of them took his pipe from his mouth, looked at the five marks, spat, and replaced the pipe.

The marking-lines were apparently very old. Overgrown by the

thick grass, smoothed and rounded, they might have been made in play, years ago, if people played in pastures.

Someone, several years previously, had ploughed five straight lines across the big field, dividing it into five equal pieces. But now the lines were overgrown, nearly obliterated, and the land was one large pasture again.

Behind the men, a narrow road curved and twisted upward to a mountain pass. The mountain range, stark, purple and vast, overlooked three sides of the rich bottom-land which comprised the large pasture. Nothing moved in the hills, no houses were visible, and the silence of the five men seemed in keeping with the silence and strength of the mountains.

A signpost pointed up the hill nearby, 'To Magheraliffe, 3 miles.' Down the slope, an arm pointed to 'Barrow in the plain, 5 miles.' Beside the signpost, at the cross-roads, a wooden platform like a little stage was raised on some stones. A notice read, 'Dancing trial on Sunday of next week.'

Into the silence, from the direction of Magheraliffe, there came the sound of a man whistling as he descended the mountain road. He whistled in the Irish fashion, with many appoggiaturas and a grace-note to almost every bar. The tune was a march, sprightly and fast, and the men on the wall raised themselves to listen.

The footsteps came nearer, the springy military tread of a highland soldier, and the five farm-labourers waited for the whistler to appear. When at last the man appeared by the wall, he proved to be a brown-faced roughly dressed man like the others. Apparently a farm-labourer, the only difference between the newcomer and the men on the wall was that the hair of the whistler was quite white. His face and body, however, were those of a young man, not more than thirty.

'Morra, Tom,' the men on the wall said, one by one.

'Morra, boys,' the newcomer answered, as he sat down. He swung his legs inwards, lit a pipe, and there was silence for several minutes.

The men cleared their throats, coughed, spat, sucked at their teeth, pulled at their pipes. Every now and then it seemed that one would speak, but invariably the sound trailed off into one of the vague noises instead. Conversation appeared to be an effort for the six men. They looked at one another, or looked at the big field, and made little half-grunting, half-coughing sounds, but it was a long time before there were any words.

'Great grass weather,' said one labourer at last. 'Aye.'

The simple remark was weighed and considered by the other five, as if it were extremely important.

'Aye,' said the oldest man. He pursed his lips, and shook his head from side to side, slowly. 'Aye. 'Tis great times for grass.'

There was a little laugh from all. The old man turned to the last comer, a small friendly smile on his rough face.

'I 'pose it's strange like, Tom,' he questioned, while the others shuffled a little closer, 'to be working on the land again, after all them years.'

Tom grinned. 'Begor, yes,' he said, slowly. "'Tis that. But o' course,' he added, 'we had farm work over there—of a kind.'

'Did you now,' asked another labourer eagerly. "'Twas breaking stones we were, all the time.'

'Faith,' put in another, 'even stones is natural like. *We* had mailsacks to sew, every day.' He spat in the brook, and added, 'Mailsacks, begor.'

Everyone laughed, as if some good joke had passed, and after a pause another man repeated, 'Mailsacks, huh,' ruminatively.

There was silence again, until the man called Tom did as the others had been doing before he arrived. He glanced at the small herd, glanced back at the large field, ran his eye over the five long marking-lines, and spat in the stream with a tiny head-shake.

'Aye,' said one of the labourers, as if in answer to a remark. "'Tis nearly overgrown they are, nearly overgrown.'

'Faith, they were good bounds just the same,' put in the youngest man. 'Let's see. Fourteen I was, the year of the big ploughing. I'm thirty in March. Sixteen year them lines is there.'

'Begor, a man could see 'em yet—if there was need, like,' remarked the old man, and again everyone laughed.

Tom commenced to whistle, the same lilting march with which he had descended the mountain. He whistled gravely, intently, with the air of one rendering a serious and very important selection, and the others listened with equal intentness. Their stolid, bovine faces had little expression, but each man strained slightly towards the whistler.

When he ceased, a small chorus of grunts and mutters came from the other men, but the nearest approach to speech was, 'Aye, faith,' repeated with a little nodding of the head by each of the five.

'Ye'll be staying here, Tom?' questioned the old man at last. 'For a while, I mane.'

'That's right, Denny,' agreed Tom. 'For a good while.'

'Then there should be six,' said Denny at once, nodding to the ancient marks in the big field.

Immediately there was an outbreak of excited conversation. The grunts and tiny coughs gave way to a heated technical discussion.

'She's split in five now,' said old Denny. He nodded to the grass-grown marks. 'To split her in six y'have to break up and start all over.' Waving a brown big-fingered hand, he repeated dogmatically, 'All over.'

'Sure that's lawna rawmash,' interposed the youngest. 'Just plain rubbish,' he translated into English. 'It's as aisy as dividing a pound into half-crowns.'

'Wisha, God help ye, Shamus,' commented the man beside him, pityingly. He turned a broad grin on the youthful Shamus, and held out his hand with five flakes of cut plug in it. 'Make 'em into six for us, Shamus,' he grinned. 'Into six—without smashin' em!'

Shamus held the five flakes of tobacco, smiling a little sheepishly, while the others laughed. 'Begor, I think it's right y'are, Michael,' he was commencing, when Tom interrupted.

'S'pose you rolled 'em all up, filled a pipe, smoked it all round?' he asked, looking from face to face. A general grunt of dissatisfaction answered him, and old Denny went on with his argument about dividing the field.

At last, after a hundred calculations and rejections, it was agreed that the best way was to leave the existing lines, 'if 'twas only for old memories' as one man put it, and to run another line along the bottom of the field, subtracting one-fifth from each of the existing divisions.

'She ought to start from the big blackthorn there,' explained Michael, pointing. Five pairs of practised eyes followed his out-stretched hand.

'From just above the blackthorn,' amended old Denny, and Michael agreed. 'Aye, just above. That's fair, Tom?' he queried, and Tom nodded.

'Then,' went on Michael, 'she should run to ——'

'Get to hell off my land,' interrupted a voice. 'Get off that wall,' it went on, 'you pack of dirty skulking good-for-nothing robbers.'

II

Three men had approached, along the edge of the field, while the talk about the division was in progress. A tall man in evening dress came first; immediately behind him a short, stout priest with a chubby good-humoured face panted a little as he walked. Last in the line, but pushing his way past the other two, was a powerful big-shouldered man in tweeds.

Tanned and good-looking, hatless, with a frank and friendly expression, his menacing words seemed completely out of keeping with his

appearance. He thrust his way past the priest and the other man, gripping an ash stick with a silver ferrule, as he repeated, in the same threatening tone, 'Get to hell off my land—you.'

The six labourers showed no surprise. One by one they touched their hats to the man in evening clothes, said, 'Good evening, father,' to the priest. One by one they touched their hats to the man with the stick, with a civil 'Good evening, sir.'

'A fine evening, glory be to God,' added old Denny, but by that time the man in tweeds was level with the group on the wall. He shook his fist across the narrow brook, seemed about to hurl the stick at old Denny, finally almost choked in rage as he noticed Tom.

'Get them murdering robbers off my land,' he snarled to the man in evening dress. 'If a major of polis can't do it, who can?'

The major looked at him with a tiny tolerant smile. Tall, slim, well-built and of healthy appearance, he seemed surprised by the outburst, and held out one hand as if to restrain his friend's impetuosity.

'Oh, come—look here, Prendergast,' he broke off in embarrassment. 'These chaps aren't doing any harm. Are they?' he demanded. 'You can't—'

'Oh, go to hell,' interrupted Prendergast roughly. 'Begging your pardon, father,' he added to the priest. 'It just shows,' he went on to the Major, 'what fools they make of ye in England. Them bastards is looking at my land.'

'But you can't'—began the police officer again, while the six men sat motionless, listening.

'I tell ye, Barton,' said Prendergast again, 'they're looking at my land. If ye weren't a fool ye'd know what that means. You know, Father Malone,' he added, turning to the priest.

'Oh, well, you know, Timothy,' the priest began deprecatingly, but Prendergast turned away impatiently.

'Why are they sitting with their backs to the road?' he demanded of Barton. 'Does a man sit facing the road or facing a field—tell me that,' he continued excitedly.

Barton turned to retrace his steps. 'Let's get back to the house, yes?' he suggested attempting to lead the way.

Prendergast stopped him, apparently struggling for self-control. He laid one hand on the priest's arm, as if to claim his support.

'Them six men,' he said, slowly and carefully, 'is dividing up my land. *My* land,' he repeated. 'They're dividing it up *now*. And them six men is murderers, every one.'

'Oh, rubbish,' interrupted the policeman, brusquely. 'You go too far, Timothy. Come on home.'

'In them hills,' said Prendergast pityingly, waving a hand to the nearby mountains. 'There's hundreds of fools like you, buried. Fools that didn't know a murderer when they saw one,' he added viciously.

Barton turned swiftly, nettled. 'These are your own labourers, I think,' he said coldly. 'They look—to my unpractised eye—like any other decent peasant.'

'Peasant!' The farmer sneered, nodding his head contemptuously. 'Peasant. Them's not peasants—they're farm-labourers, *my* labourers. But they have ideas, oh yes. They're all going to be gentlemen, oh yes. I tell you, Barton—Polis-major Barton,' he added ironically, 'they tried it before, sixteen year ago. And I tell you again, they're murderers all.'

'I refuse to—' commenced the policeman, but Father Malone stopped him with a warning head-shake. Barton turned towards the priest, frowning a question, to turn and look at the silent group on the wall, as Prendergast pointed.

'That man,' said Prendergast slowly, pointing to the white-haired man called Tom, 'that man was ten years on Dartmoor.'

Tom looked at the farmer stolidly, then turned his glance to the priest and Barton. Barton was regarding him with something like horror.

'Even *you*,' went on Prendergast bitingly, 'must have heard of Dartmoor. Well, that's where the boyo belonged, for ten year.' He pointed to Tom again, as impersonally as if he were discussing a bullock. 'All the others is murderers, too,' he added, in a casual tone, apparently weary of a profitless discussion.

'Then why do you employ them?' snapped Barton, as he turned away contemptuously.

'Every working man in Ireland is a robber and a murderer,' explained Prendergast patiently. 'Wait-wait,' he went on, as the priest raised a hand in protest. 'D'ye see that?' he asked, pointing to one of the raised lines in the field.

'See what?' inquired Barton, peering.

'No,' resumed the farmer, in a pitying voice again, 'you wouldn't. Well, there's a line there. There's five of them, where them bastards ploughed up my land sixteen year ago.'

The police-major regarded Prendergast in bewilderment. 'How?' he demanded. 'Why? Did you want it done?'

Prendergast nearly choked. For a moment it looked as if he would jump into the brook and attack the men on the wall. Then the priest drew him aside, and the three men turned away.

'Sixteen year ago,' said Prendergast in a choking voice, 'them rats called themselves the Irish Republic. Them and their kind.'

‘The Government—’ began Barton.

‘*They* were the Government,’ snarled Prendergast. ‘Them and their kind, rats—robbers and murderers. And the first thing they done was to divide *my* land. D’ye see?’ he demanded excitedly. ‘D’ye see? Now they’re looking at my land again.’

‘But what happened before?’ asked Barton. ‘I was only a kid, in England, you know,’ he added apologetically.

Prendergast fell into line between the other two, and they walked in single file, along the brook, in the dusk.

‘It’s a good job there was a decent Government in England just then,’ he said, through his teeth. ‘Else them rats wouldn’t be sittin’ on the wall now. A good job,’ he repeated, ‘a good job.’

The men on the wall sat motionless and silent, in the gathering dusk, as the three proceeded towards the distant mansion.

‘From above the blackthorn,’ said Michael at last, ‘to the rock opposite the willows. That’s fair, Tom?’ he asked earnestly.

‘Aye,’ said Tom. ‘That’s fair.’

SEVEN POETS



H. B. MALLALIEU

POEM

YOU who can see no end to agony,
Projecting your despair over seven seas,
Cloaking continents with your single pity,
Beware the haven of your charitable ease.

Let the youth turn to his paradise, the park,
Lie with his angel in a thoughtless heaven;
But when the gates are shut and the city dark
He will turn to his hero, to the legend even.

Love in ambition the exotic star,
Into the deep of your dream plunge for pearls:
Know that on suffering a man may go far,
Deceitful as lovers or with the bravado of girls.

Be like that bird the scavenger of flesh,
Free in the air above the braver dead:
The guessed-at misery need not enmesh
Your pity nor make uneasy your indolent bed.

For under this shadow that from the south has spread
Its bomber's wings over your lovely houses;
And upon this manual misery you dread,
Ambition, less eager, still expectantly carouses

With what was once the beautiful and good:
But now it is the film star, the yacht, the white
Luxury of the country house, the walk in the wood,
The champagne, the lethargic mistress which incite

In selfish guises the reformer's greatest wish.
These you may have, your tickets to nowhere.
You may glide through your riches like a fish,
Make an island of love out of your sweet despair.

It shall cool still the lonely room and the lawns
On which you walk far from an arctic doom.
Lost early in the game, among the ivory pawns
You move with a gay king to an inevitable tomb.

The seas are shallow and you who stand on shore
High on the casual cliffs can see
The perilous sands, the storm there is in store:
Weeping you wait, yet passive as the tree.

Some will not founder in the singular straits:
But mighty from the misery you know
Will smash the suffering of sixty states
And with a spring's fury drive forth the snow.

You do not believe this or any other legend
Except that of inferno and the delightful sins.
There is nothing in the future you can send
Your urgent messages or hopeful greetings.

O turn from your isolation and your flight
Sad and ignorant over an Atlantic of fear.
What legend lacks your eye may see when light
Breaks finally on a landscape peaceful and clear.

What legend lacks or faith cannot provide
Let the hand give, or if it must the gun:
Until the ideal which you now deride,
Being based on suffering, by suffering is won.

Where is the world going and you moving
The gay king in his magnificent robe?
Destination is never but there's an end to loving:
Our journey is plotted on an aimless globe.

DAVID GASCOYNE

SNOW IN EUROPE

Out of their slumber Europeans spun
Dense dreams: appeasement, miracle, glimpsed flash
Of a new golden era; but could not restrain
The vertical white weight that fell last night
And made their continent a blank.

Hush, says the sameness of the snow.
The Ural and the Jura now rejoin
The furthest Arctic's desolation. All is one
Sheer monotone: plain, mountain: country, town:
Contours and boundaries no longer show.

The warring flags hang colourless a while;
Now midnight's icy zero feigns a truce
Between the signs and seasons, and fades out
All shots and cries. But when the great thaw comes,
How red shall be the melting snow, how loud the drums!

R. P. HEWETT

TWO POEMS

I

REMEMBERING the single thrush
in silhouette on the red morning sky
its urgent profile like a weathercock
remembering also the blanket snow
a vivid eiderdown in the frosty headlamps
thinking of the dreamy unforgettable road
festooned with yellow weeds in the winter sun
and the frosty slates and the frozen iron of December
with early newsboys in the draughty shop;
feeling bare feet on tiles, knowing the quiet
and secret boughs of winter trees, where robin
grips with his spindle feet, stares at the soil
watching the icy clods for moving worms:
and almost tears for music in the night
dark chords and lighted notes through the bare trees;
seeing these simple sights
feeling these far and fallen thoughts
knowing this beauty gone
remembering these calmer days, this peace.

Elusive spring has crept along the grass
the green drifts in the water by the stone
and now the flowers bind wildly on the wall
shoot into bud and burst in bloom for miles
starry in shade and glowing in the sun
and weeds flower madly in the fecund heat;
the frantic haste of spring is in the woods
fledgelings fly off before the broods are reared
seeds grow and bud and bloom and seed and die
and tangle in their hundred stems together;
and soon the frogs are out, the cuckoo's gone,
the candleflowers are dead, the grass is grey,
millions of seedpods in the blazing sun,
woodsmoke, and gnats, and leaves, and early dusk.

Last night the air was tight with later storm
the hot bed and the thunder on the hills
and lightning through the window:
sitting now in my neat and friendly garden
where, Dutch and stiff, tulips stand by the fence,
within the green house after the blinking sun
think how there was no spring, no time to find
deep in the woods pathetic nests, to watch
the first giant buds of trees; and know
so happens history, never in gentle growth
in sudden leaps and change—
deep in our summer's heavy reign, before
the lingering frost is off the moorland's edge . . .
this is what happens, thus it is with us;
is growing now the gnawing will for war
tyranny trampling down the flower of truth
the hidden hate, tense hand and silent mouth,
our power crushed and cowered, our lovers slashed:
it's later than we think. . . .
is growing too, our solid love and grip
our band of all exploited skill and mind;
in meetings, village matches, shopping queues,
through winding lanes and workshops, by the docks
in kitchen, quad, down mine or liner's hold
we spread our lucid word and plan for power;
under the sea our secret cables hum
our wireless love vibrates around the world:
from this the clash: oh speed our thoughts together
to stalk this terror, win the final round.

II

FROM Winchester the road was dazed with heat;
after the droughty downs the lanes were night
and drowned in leaves across their caky ruts:
down through the hedge's tunnel and the dust
lay my small village huddling in its trees.

Unmoved since twenty-two its settled houses
however tiny to my later eyes;
the fields the trees the bushes seemed the same
as when I left them in that dreaded April:
and though the men were dead or gone to Norwich
the women bedridden, the children married,
yet with the known road under my older feet
familiar cowsheds and remembered lanes,
swooped back to me those misty years
when Hampshire was my home and London lovely.

The cottage squatted in its tangled garden
condemned for years to rot and sink;
the thatch was mossy and the well was rust
the hollow logweed grew beside the barn
where the late sun was silting through the cracks;
and redhead docks stood in the living-room
against the curling paper on the wall
towards the ceiling's plaster and its stains:
I picked a plum from the forgotten tree
and wordless smells hung in the evening air,
telling me I was eight, the school was finished,
through the long grass the twisty path, and home
was the small chimney down the valley's blue.

Here I was reared: these fields were mine for running
these beechy lanes my setting and my soil:
a solemn boy with knees and canvas satchels . . .
the milkcan handle cold in Christmas snow,
the plovers howling ghosts against the wind:
the larches in the copse were paintbox colours
and the red admirals hovered on the ivy;
the autumn brought its gleanings in the stubble
and apples drooping by the window pane.

This was my world, this unconsidered corner,
and a long journey was a league away
through fields to Baybridge or to Fisher's Pond:
London was at the Pole, a kindly giant
with angel porters and tremendous trams:

and here I watched and walked, while vast unknown
history swept by, and blood in Ireland,
war on the Soviets, Sacco in his gaol,
crisis, indemnities, putsches and revolts. . . .
and I unseeing in my woods, happy in knowing
peace on the skyline and the future firm.

We weep for what is gone: my dying dog
is the pathetic puppy in the market cage;
never again that long oblivious calm
and yet our tears for loss, the dying years
the sun and colour of the spacious past:
and to-night's misty trees and mackerel sky
remembered in the draughty days to come
tearing at hearts shaken by midnight guns.

GEOFFREY PARSONS

ANTAGONISTS

BETWEEN man and nature is no longer enmity,
The conquered earth accepts her fate:
Beneath his feet
Her contours swell with fabulous indemnity.

Between man and man his comrade is no enmity,
A common power, a common need,
From each to each
Bind beyond frontiers in a natural unity.

Between whom then and whom is there still enmity?
Only between us and those
For whom an equal peace
Is ending of power and the last calamity.

CLIFFORD DYMANT

LABOUR EXCHANGE

THESE men, clutching cards, stand in slack groups
Round the stove in the wooden room, fog
Shoving its dim nose around the door.

The clock keeps a prim eye on them, intent
On supervision, and white with disapproval of
Their profane disillusion and their thick mirth.

They have had a slice of bread and lard;
Warmed their hands at a cup of tea;
Left wives scrubbing in aprons of sacking,

For this, the terminus of hopes and sorrows,
Where the blazing stadium and the satisfaction of food,
Or the cipher of want, daily arrive and depart.

They stand, for many hours, obscure,
Glimpsing through windows the autumn sun on
The spires of the world they built, but do not share.

KENNETH ALLOTT

THE CHILDREN

THE young imagine their futures in primary colours,
One climax inside another like Chinese boxes:
The military rescue con brio, or bearded explorer
Recording the flora of the Amazon;
Adventures improbable as Hans Andersen,
The gold where the rainbow is earthed round every street-corner,
The throttle wide open like delirium.

It is the sun ripens: heads bent over copybooks,
And the scratch of steel pens clutched and wielded inexpertly
Lights the barbed wire between desire and performance
Even when desire is stunted like the Arctic willow
And money and power and the fatal gifts of appearance
Whisper of the scope and freedom of the lavish sea.
Children stare through a metaphorical distance
Which conceals the psychotic, the cripple, and the refugee.

The earth-tremors grow infrequent and less violent
Coming to grips with the dimensional world.
Men stroll in the streets together less like a pageant,
The moon is not what is meant,
We lose the primitive energy of the word.
To the adolescent it appears again and again
Time is a gentleman with no time for him.

Men are exploded by necessity,
But let these children have no more to fear
Than denotes them human in a house of care.
Let them have flying poise like the stylized skater.
Love will send in his card at least for a time.
Let their hands be nimble as the hands of a juggler
Long after midnight to feel right as rain,
As free from responsibility as the insane.
The present and future shall fall together and kiss
Before the old teacher retire to his shrubs and pottering,
And the caretaker knock with his brush in the silent schoolroom,
And the primers are locked away, and the class dismiss.

ROBERT WALLER

POEM

LYING together was sun's warmth to seed
Concealed within our bodies which are worlds
That feed upon our sensualities.
We are the wombs of secret pregnancies
Time slyly rears; we do not guess
What children we shall bear, what foetus folds
Inside our flesh to make uncertain certainties.
I must have slept like Adam while this love
Grew underneath my ribs in quiet industry.
Our pleasures were too modest for such parentage.
How many simple acts know they connect
Like levers with a vast machinery?
Yet we have made this child whose cries were forced
One night upon me in its orphan birth.
Pity my pain and save new life from death.

JUGAL KISHORE SHUKLA

ONE DAY

Translated from the Hindustani

THE eastern sky became grey, changed to pale and then to a blood red. Cranes flew in files across the sky.

Soft rays of the morning sun fell on the high tops of the houses on either side of the bazaar street.

Rubbish, scraps of paper and bits of straw which littered the road gave it the appearance of a sleepy girl, half awake on her bed, with sticky eyes and tresses falling over the face.

With their 'dhoties' rolled up to the knees, naked to the waist, healthy villagers and their wives whose waists swayed rhythmically under the weight of fresh vegetables which they carried on their heads, were going towards the Bazaar.

The bourgeois gentlemen were walking briskly, sticks in their hands. No 'ekka' or cart was visible, or motor-cars hooting at the lethargy of these primitive conveyances.

Beggars, blind and disabled, adorned the bazaar by spreading their rags for receiving alms. A blind, bearded hunchback entreated at the busy crossing in a touching and pitiful bass,

‘Give in the name of God,
Give in the name of Allah.’

His appeal without the usual accompaniment of the din of the market echoed solitary, evoking strange forebodings in one's heart.

After a while the market became busier. A noisy, iron-tyred 'ekka' drove past the shop of Ghazi, the fruit seller, grating harshly against the eardrums and pouring forth an endless tune of Khuder, Khudd, Khudder. And what was the upshot of it all?

Unknowingly it disturbed Pachkaurie in his deep slumber, underneath the projecting platform of the fruit-seller's shop where he lay huddled up in sleep. He straightened out the snake-like coil of his body with a yawn and gazed intently at the 'Ekkawallah' as though he was going to swallow him up through the only eye he possessed.

All night long he had been lying there like a corpse, on the straw unpacked from the baskets of fruits. Though that six or seven feet

long dark and dingy basement was colonized by mosquitos, it was kept cool throughout the night by the underlying drain. It stank no doubt, but that could not be helped.

'... Yes, last night's toddy was great. These damned Swarajists go about preaching against drink, the sweet lovely drink which kills all care... hum, the bedfellows of their own mothers! If we too had enough to eat and no worries, we would never have wasted any money on drinks. It's our hard earned money and we shall spend it as we like. It's none of their business how we spend it,' grumbled Pachkaurie as he rubbed off the white scum deposited by night in a corner of his mouth.

Now that the effects of the last night's toddy had passed off, the odours of the rotting fruits and straw proved to be unbearable. And just then, with his mouth covered with a soiled rag came the sweeper, to give Pachkaurie notice to clear out. Then suddenly he recollected yesterday's blow that Ghazi had given him for sleeping there in spite of his warnings.

Thank God, to-day Ghazi had not yet come to open the shop. His back ached; and like a quadruped Pachkaurie crept out on all fours. He picked up his basket and a torn sheet of dirty cloth which formed all his possessions, cursed the loincloth which had become loose and tightened it, fastened the purse which contained a few coppers, around his waist, and was soon on his legs to go to the public latrine, which was situated in the neighbouring by-lane. He carried the upturned basket on his head. On the way Pachkaurie saw Bharosé, his acquaintance, a coolie like himself, aged about sixteen, at a distance. He was coming towards him, with a Babu's luggage on his head, who had just got down from an 'ekka.' The Babu's hair was dishevelled and his eyelids were heavy with sleep, which showed that he was coming from some railway journey. At the sight of the lad, Pachkaurie slowed down his pace and adjusted the basket on his head with a cunning twinkle in his eye.

The Babu strode toward. Pachkaurie followed by Bharosé. The Babu went past Packhaurie and following the Babu, Bharosé overtook him. Packhaurie with a mock-serious air inquiringly nodded his head:

'Why did not you salute me, your father's son-in-law, you goose!' Saying this he gave him a slap on his head and took to his heels. Bharosé, a herdsman by caste could not swallow the insult of being slapped by a damned Untouchable. On receiving the slap he began to act like an automaton, worked by an electric button. He put the luggage down on the ground, and closing one of his eyes jeered at him

with hate, and with hands on which gleamed silver bangles twisted his moustaches, went a few paces choked with rage. Pachkaurie was disappearing just then round the corner, jeering at Bharosé, making vulgar signs and shouting invectives.

Bharosé pointed his fist menacingly at the disappearing enemy and threatened to thrash him when he could get hold of him. Just then he satisfied himself by calling Pachkaurie's mother and sisters all sorts of names. Finding Bharosé quarrelling, the Babu threatened to engage another coolie. Afraid of losing his job Bharosé took up the load and followed the Babu, making mean attempts to flatter his annoyed employer who by this time had been enraged against the whole race of coolies.

After he had regained his good mood he became reminiscent and related an incident how he had been pestered by the coolies during his recent journey, who wanted exorbitant wages. One of the coolies had become so impertinent as to mishandle him.

At the tap near the public latrine, coolies, labourers, cartmen and beggarly vagabonds were busy at their toilet. Some were brushing their teeth with fresh twigs of 'neem,' others were going towards the latrine, while a few were singing the songs which they had heard the previous night in the 'Nautanki,'¹ and in imitation of the dancing girls were making gestures with their hands. Pachkaurie entrusted his basket to a coolie of his acquaintance and borrowing his 'lota' went to the latrine. Settling down there he began to calculate the wages he had earned during the past week.

'Thanks to the tea party the week had been a lucky one, one rupee, four annas and one pice extra, lucky, eh! But how is it that I have only these thirteen damned pice left?'

He put the coins on the ground and started counting them:

'This anna bit is definitely a counterfeit. Here are the four pice and the seven coppers—yes, coppers—'

Then he tried to recollect what he had spent during the week.

'Four annas spent over "Sattu,"² and salt, six pice per day on toddy, one pice for . . . h'm. . . . The total comes to-oo-o-um-um it comes to one rupee and one pice. But I forgot to add three pice spent on "bidis" and tobacco. . . .'

The accounts were correct and there remained money enough for the day's drink.

He began to devise some method of disposing of the bad coin.

¹ A popular form of drama.

² Grams and oats are baked in heated sand and then ground into flour in certain proportion. This flour is called "sattu".

But someone knocked loudly at the iron door from outside and startled him. He came out and washed his face and hands. But a tenacious straw from the filthy bed was still sticking to his hair. Returning the 'lota' to its owner Pachkaurie picked up his basket and turning to a young man with closely cropped hair he asked:

'Well, Jokhu! how much did that swine of a "lala" pay you yesterday?' Jokhu was a small statured, stocky fellow of about forty. There were tattooed pictures of Hanuman the monkey god and of a butterfly on his wrists. A partridge moved restlessly to and fro in a cage which was kept by his side, while he dozed, half-naked reclining on a big stone.

Pachkaurie's inquiry nettled the man. His blood was up. His nostrils dilated with anger and he burst out,

'You, it's you, I know the likes of you; you have spoilt our chances of earning good wages by your competition.'

The veins on his neck distended as he went on snarling,

'You bed-fellows of your own mothers! You are willing to carry a load for just three pice or even only for two, you cursed beasts!' It was you the other day who offered to carry that luggage for three pice when I was demanding four and snatched my bread from my mouth. Now, you bastard, you have the face to inquire what he paid me? Bastard!'

On hearing these words Pachkaurie lost his temper. Jokhu had stolen the souvenir his dead sister had given him; a beautiful 'miss-case.'

It happened in this way. One day when the business was very slack, all the coolies were idle and smoked the hookah by turns. When Pachkaurie's turn came to take a puff, he inclined his head and sucked hard at it. Just then Jokhu moved his head stealthily towards his turban, in the folds of which Pachkaurie kept that memento. Pachkaurie could not feel the loss, but things of this sort cannot remain hidden for long. Pachkaurie had never married, nor had he made friends with any woman. His sister was the only one to help him in distress. But now she was dead and had left him all alone in this weary world full of sorrows. To lose her souvenir was an irretrievable loss.

Apart from this, foul language is a disagreeable thing in itself. Then, it was no winter to force Pachkaurie to make friends with coolies who possessed blankets. Now, in summer he never cared for anybody; what of Jokhu?

Infuriated he rushed at him and they closed in a combat. The cage of the bird was struck by a kick and rolled far away. Pachkaurie's turban got unfastened, fell down and spread all over the ground.

A crowd gathered, and the atmosphere became tense. But such events occurred here every day.

The crowd attracted the policeman from the crossing. Cursing, and brandishing his baton, he came towards them. The way had been blocked.

Reaching the spot, he began to dust their backs with his baton and threatened to have them put into jail some day to rot.

Curses and invectives were being exchanged freely; and the affair closed only when Jokhu's friends intervened and took him away.

Pachkaurie wandered about dragging his rough, clawlike fingers along the walls as he walked, picking quarrels with dirty sweet-meat sellers when they demanded their balance.

It was past ten in the morning when he reached the bazaar. He went to the man who sold grams fried in oil, near a tall building which was under construction. He had just ordered gram worth half a pice, when a well-dressed young gentleman with his wife, children and dog came along in his car. Pachkaurie left the gram vendor and ran after the car. A voice growled from inside, 'Don't want you, get away.'

But experience had taught Pachkaurie that in spite of their growling they needed a coolie. Ignoring all rebuffs he followed the car to the draper's where it stopped. The Babu Sahib got down with his wife. The children and the dog remained behind in the car. As he got down, the Babu Sahib kissed and patted the dog and frowned at Pachkaurie, shouting in an anglicized tone, 'Damn you, rascal! Get away.'

There was no use waiting further. Panting, Pachkaurie cast a glance towards the fortunate dog, wiped off the sweat from his forehead, and disgusted, retraced his steps. The Babu Sahib spat indignantly as though dirty and lousy Pachkaurie were an insect and had got into his mouth. As he climbed the steps leading to the shop, he remarked to his wife: 'What idiotic swine! They won't leave you in peace, even when you shout at them. The Government ought to take steps to stop it. The brutes!'

Returning to the gram vendor's Pachkaurie had his breakfast of gram mixed with smelly sauce. And as if he were obliging him by giving the half-pice in hard cash, he inflicted upon the man the story of Jokhu's abominable behaviour in minute detail.

When Pachkaurie was washing his hands at the tap, an obstinate fly persistently harassed him by settling on his back. He was so annoyed that he hurt his back in beating it off.

Two gentlemen passed close by. They took note of Pachkaurie's act and one of them remarked: 'How very vulgar these rustics are.'

'Yes, it's all so filthy. It is their habit,' rejoined the other nodding his head.

But the first replied after a moment's reflection: 'But some fools say that poverty and hunger are responsible for all this—'

Now that the breakfast was over Pachkaurie was lighting a 'bidi'¹ when he heard: 'Coolie. Any coolie here? — Damn the bastards! — you see Babujee, they lurk all day long like pariahs, but you see, sir! the moment you need one, they disappear like soap-sud.' It was a potbellied grocer speaking in disgust to his customer who was waiting for a coolie, after finishing his purchases. In a short while a bunch of coolies appeared struggling at a distance to get the first chance.

A regular stampede ensued. Pachkaurie too ran pushing and exchanging blows. As he ran, the dirty and sticky sacred tuft of hair in the middle of his head swayed in the air like a hemp string. The Chinese-like sparse beard and moustaches, the protruding Adam's apple, the black skin, the cringing attitude, and the phlegmatic appearance all went to make the creature that was Pachkaurie. The muscles of his leg protruding like a spindle, which showed meandering varicose veins, told the tale of his life's toils. There was no covering on the body, save a piece of loincloth and the only eye that he possessed had red threads in it. Seeing the coolies racing towards him, the Babu moved aside.

Pachkaurie ran neck and neck with another coolie. Both of them were ahead of all others. When the two neared the shop, Pachkaurie elbowed his rival. But he was a tall and stalwart fellow. Receiving the push he readily balanced himself, and gave such a push in his turn that Pachkaurie fell flat on the ground, like some old wall, and began to howl. The ribs worked like bellows. A buzzing crowd soon gathered. The grocer flared up at this rowdyism:

'Did you see, Babujee? What perfect scoundrels these fellows are! The constable, you see, will just come and blame me for all this. These vagabonds you see, should be flayed alive and besprinkled with salt you see!' he cried at the top of his voice.

Seeing the crowd the policeman started from his place.

But in order to save his own skin the grocer dealt blows to the coolies and scolded them loudly, so that the constable might hear him.

In spite of all this the policeman came and belaboured them with the emblem of 'peace'. The two culprits were about to be led off, but timely intervention of the Babu Sahib saved them. The Babu

¹ The tobacco wrapped in a leaf for smoking like a cigarette.

Sahib's philanthropy helped Pachkaurie to get the load. He lifted it and carried limping, as he walked.

'Bah! did you see Jiawan! what a crafty old knave that one-eyed fellow is, managed to secure his job by feigned weeping,' so saying a young coolie belched loudly, spat and crossed to the other side.

While Pachkaurie was crossing the road with the load on his head, he heard a bicycle bell behind him. Before he could get away, it came down and the front wheel struck his leg. An angry gentleman with a ghandi-cap on was compelled to get down from the bicycle and poured forth a shower of curses at the man.

People began to reprove Pachkaurie for possessing such a dead eye and then jeered him for coming in the way of the respectable leader of the 'Workers' Union.'

The lamps had been lighted. Having boozed at the toddy khana, Pachkaurie walked towards 'Uchwa' with unsteady steps.

Rows of dark hovels, thatched with crude tiles with a narrow mud verandah in front of each, displayed the architectural glory of 'Uchwa.' Those who peopled the place were Ekkawallahs, coolies, pedlars, domestic servants, maid servants. These men served their masters during the day time, while the leisure they utilized either by exchanging filthy words amongst themselves or attending to their daily routines. The place also served as a rendezvous where he usually spent evenings. It was full of bustle and life there. Sometimes they would play cards, or some palanquin-bearer would sing haltingly to them, in a trite tune, the historic tale of Alh a-Udal:

'The swords were clashing,
The sabres were flashing . . .'

Sometimes Pachkaurie enjoyed listening to these stories or he flirted with the widow who lived at the extreme end of the row.

That day the inhabitants of the place were sitting in a circle as usual in front of the verandah smoking the hookah. An earthen kerosene oil-lamp sent up a dark, thick line of smoke, which curled up above the red flame and ultimately vanished in thin air. In a hovel near by an old man was coughing hoarsely. When the coughing fit subsided he asked his daughter,

'Tirasiya! Give me a little water, my dear!' and then resumed coughing again.

Having arrived Pachkaurie blew through a paper producing a tremulous note in imitation of some English band. The single red eyeball was visible through the drooping eyelid. His cheeks and eyelids looked swollen. As he approached he shouted to them: 'Gut morning,

yes!' and squatted with a thump by the side of Jagbandan who was supposed to be the head of the place.

'Brother Jagbandan! didn't the news reach you——?' and he looked angry.

'Jokhu fell out with me——'

Suddenly he became violent, and shooting his hand forward he shouted with rage, 'By my life! Don't call me a man if I don't take my revenge by shedding his blood. It's by you, Jagbandan brother, that I swear——' Pointing towards him he cried: 'Brother! Look here you are my master—my all, I never keep anything from you—firstly, that son of a devil had stolen—yes stolen, my dead sister's keepsake. Secondly, he—he quarrelled with me over a trifle and cursed and abused me. Brother Jagbandan! I stand here and swear by—by me and—yes, yes, by you and by all present here, and I fall at your feet. I tell you truly'—he slapped his chest—'if I don't kill that rogue, I am not a true son of my father. The lover of his mother! And what of me. I care a brass button for death. That's a fact. It's no joke, brother! May his father be damned, and—and mine too. What do I care, eh? The devil may take them.'

Pachkaurie babbled, reeling with drunkenness. Bharosé arrived just then: 'There, there he comes, the bosom friend of that dog.'

And he rushed to strike him, but staggered and fell down. He was muttering something to himself. His face was pale and lifeless like wax. He started vomiting.

The old man coughed.

'Khon-Khon-Khon, Kha-Kha-Kha—Tirrasso! My daughter, give-é-é some water.'

People carried Pachkaurie to the widow's room. She was annoyed by this new worry and grumbled as she prepared the bed: 'Damn the beaten cur, chooses my place for his grave.'

Pachkaurie vomited with a gurgle on the bed. The room was all filled with a nauseating smell.

The widow cursed loudly and kicked him on the back. Thinking her to be his sister, Pachkaurie stuttered inarticulately: 'Si-si-si-Sister! dear, come sister. Um-um, I'll come with you. Sis-ter! why did you leave me alone? Ta-ta-ta take your "Missi" case, here. But, tell me why did you leave me alone——'

Pachkaurie cried, as though he was deeply hurt by his sister having deceived him, for she had gone away to the other world without taking him with her. A dog howled outside, on the deserted lane. The shrill, sharp wail pierced right into the quivering heart of the dark night.

There was a rustling sound of something struggling behind the heap of the fuel wood, straw and other odds and ends lying in the room. A rat squeaked as if struggling for life. And a cat passed stealthily by, holding a mouse between its jaws, leaving bloodstains on the floor.

Pachkaurie raised his chest with a deep sigh and dropped down again in a stupor.

The faltering voice was heard again, 'Ah! Tirasso, my child, water! Khon-Khon-Khon——'

Someone banged a door and a dreadful silence reigned again.

ANONYMOUS

VLADIMIR IN THE TAIGA

An Evenk folk tale, translated from the Russian

How does a man live in the *taiga*?

A full belly—and he asks no more.

Thus the Evenks lived in the *taiga*, roaming from river to river, from hill to hill, hunting squirrels.

An Evenk roams the *taiga*, hunts the squirrel, gazes at the cedar covered with frost, looks to see how the branches grow on the trees. Whatever he may notice, he tells no one. Let them find out for themselves. He will tell his own son.

Thus did Dolboney live. If his neighbour caught one squirrel more than he did, Dolboney could not rest easy at night, wondering how to catch two. And sell them at a higher price. He would try to get to the fur-merchant's first, to smell out what prices he was offering, so as to value his own squirrel pelts higher.

If his neighbour bought a lump of sugar more than he did, a handful of flour more than he did, Dolboney cursed that neighbour and was ready to fly at his throat—out of sheer envy.

Now, Vladimir said: 'You live in the forest,' said he, 'you walk on gold, you live among riches,' said he, 'yet you go hungry. People need gold, people need squirrel-pelts. Why do you envy each other?' said he. 'You ought to live together and hunt together, and trade together.'

But the merchants said: 'Vladimir is an evil man. Vladimir is an enemy of the Tsar. Whoever kills Vladimir will get three roubles reward from the Tsar.'

So Dolboney thought he would kill Vladimir and get the three roubles reward.

Vladimir went out hunting. And as Vladimir went along, Dolboney followed, running from tree to tree. How could Vladimir get away from an Evenk?

Dolboney looked and saw Vladimir walking along, gazing at the ground as if his head was heavy with thoughts that pulled it downwards. His gun hung idle over his shoulder. Angry as Dolboney was, he felt frightened. 'What is Vladimir thinking of and why doesn't he shoot?'

Dolboney took aim. He aimed at the head, then looked and saw that Vladimir had no head; there was only a body going along in front of the gun-sight. Dolboney lowered his gun and looked again: no, Vladimir was going along with his head where it ought to be on his shoulders. Again Dolboney took aim, and again the head was missing. Dolboney had never seen anything like this. Better shoot him in the back, he thought, where can the back get to? He took aim at the back, then looked and saw that the legs were going and that above them went a head, but no back. It was frightful; the sight of his gun was turned on an empty spot.

Dolboney got frightened: I must have gone blind, he thought. He rubbed his eyes and looked about him and saw a grouse perched in a tree. He took aim: the grouse was sitting there sure enough. He might shoot it. But he did not: 'I'll only startle Vladimir,' he thought. He went on further and saw suddenly that there was no Vladimir. He had been there, but he was not there any more. He looked for tracks; the tracks were there but Vladimir was not. Dolboney started to run, thinking, so that's how Vladimir gets along, you can't catch up with him. But the tracks showed that Vladimir was not running, only walking. Dolboney ran and got out of breath. 'Let me only catch up to him,' he thought, 'and if I can't kill him with my gun, I'll kill him with my hunting spear; how can he escape me? You can kill a bear with a spear.'

All of a sudden a cuckoo called. It startled Dolboney. 'Why is the cuckoo calling?' he said to himself. 'It's autumn.' Then a woodcock began to play. 'Why is the woodcock playing?' Dolboney asked himself. 'Woodcock only play in the spring and it's autumn now.' Then he saw squirrels racing up a pine. That frightened him out of his wits. 'Oi!' said he. 'Things look very bad. When squirrels race in the autumn, the little ones will be born in winter-time, and freeze to death and there'll be no hunting. If the wood-chucks freeze, there'll be no meat, hunger will come and death. But Vladimir must be killed, mustn't he?'

Just as he was thinking this, the woodcock on the branch called out: 'Kill me, but not Vladimir.' The squirrel called: 'Kill me, but not Vladimir.' And the cuckoo called: 'Kill me, but not Vladimir.' A wolf ran up, a bear peered out from behind a cedar, an elk flung up its antlers, an otter crept by on its belly. And each of them cried: 'Kill me, but not Vladimir.'

Dolboney was frightened to death. 'If I kill the wolf,' he thought, 'the bear will tear me to pieces; if I kill the bear, the wolf will eat me; if I kill the cuckoo, the woodcock will beat me with its wings; if I

kill the woodcock the cuckoo will peck me; if I kill the elk, the otter will drown me; if I kill the otter, the elk will trample me; if I kill the squirrel, they will all be angry with me.'

So Dolboney did not kill any of them. He shot a hare.

As soon as he had shot the hare he looked up and saw Vladimir standing beside him, laughing.

'Why didn't you kill me, Dolboney?' he said.

'You had no head,' said Dolboney.

'But why didn't you shoot me in the back?'

'You had no back.'

'Then why didn't you shoot me in the waist?'

'You weren't there at all.'

'How foolish you are, Dolboney!' said Lenin. 'Let's go home.'

So they turned homewards and as they went all the birds and the beasts of the forest scattered and went about their business: the squirrel to hide nuts in the hollow of a tree, the woodcock to peck the wild red bilberries, the bear to suck wild raspberries, the wolf to fall on hares, the otter to burrow a lair for himself, the cuckoo to keep silence.

Dolboney felt ashamed as he walked beside Vladimir.

'I'm ashamed to go with you,' he said.

'Why are you ashamed?' Vladimir asked.

'Dolboney was worse than a wolf; he wanted to kill you.'

'No,' said Vladimir. 'Not worse, but just like a wolf. A wolf tears a hare to pieces and eats the meat and throws the skin away, though the skin is worth money. You wanted to kill me and get three roubles for me, but, perhaps, I'm worth more.'

Now Vladimir's ten years were up, and he left the *taiga*.

As Dolboney roamed about the *taiga*, he kept wondering: 'Why had Vladimir no head?'

'I shielded it,' said the spruce.

'Why had Vladimir no back?'

'I shielded it,' said the rosemary.

'Why was Vladimir himself not to be seen?'

'We shielded him,' cried the beasts.

Hunting went badly for Dolboney. Let him only take aim at a squirrel, and she would cry out:

'You wanted to kill Vladimir, and Vladimir is dearer than us all,' and run away from him.

Let him only aim at an elk, the elk would call out:

'You wanted to kill Vladimir, and Vladimir is dearer than us all,' and run away from him.

Many years went by. There began to be talk about the *taiga*; to-day they will say, in a month's time they will say—a winter camp has been set up on the River Taliaken. At the camp they take squirrel-pelets and in exchange give flour, and give salt, and give sugar, and give woollen cloth: they give everything and a great deal of it, five times more than the merchants ever gave. And if a man has no squirrel-pelets to give, he can get goods on credit.

So Dolboney went to the winter-camp on the Taliaken. When he got to the camp he said:

‘I have no squirrel-pelets, but I need flour.’

‘You are an Evenk, aren't you?’ they said to him. ‘Have you a gun? Have you a dog? Have you eyes and legs? Well, then, take whatever you need!’

Then Dolboney asked them:

‘Why should you give me anything? What if I don't pay you back?’

‘Where can you go? We won't give you anything another time.’

‘That's true,’ said Dolboney. ‘Where indeed can I go? If I don't pay you back, the merchant will be angry and won't give me anything another time.’

‘There are no merchants now,’ he was told.

‘Well, the Tsar will be angry.’

‘But there is no Tsar now.’

‘Where has he gone?’

‘He's been overthrown.’

‘And who does the trading then?’

‘The State does the trading,’ they told him.

Dolboney could not understand them at all.

‘Have you any children?’ they asked him.

‘One lad,’ he replied.

‘Take your lad to the Trimpei tundra,’ they told him. ‘A big winter-camp has been built there now, where a doctor and a teacher live. Your lad will be taught to read and write, he will trade in the co-operative store. Then he will be sent to a big town where he can go to school.’

‘It is Vladimir, who used to live with us, who has overthrown the Tsar and is doing the trading now,’ said Dolboney at last.

‘Yes, it's all Vladimir,’ they said. ‘Only he did not live hereabouts, but in another part.’

‘Why do you lie?’ said Dolboney. ‘He lived here, I remember well.’

Then Dolboney went home, thinking as he went: ‘How can it be

that Vladimir did not live hereabouts, when he did actually live here? Why, things like this would make a fellow's head go round. Vladimir lived here, and they say he didn't.'

How many people are there in the *taiga*? As many as there are stars in the sky. If you envy every one of them, your very veins will soon dry up. But if you live together as Vladimir says, then things will turn out well; one will give you a pinch of gunpowder, another a percussion-cap, a third will give you advice. Vladimir had done well, very well indeed!

And Dolboney sang a little song:

'Benighted was Dolboney and bitter
But Vladimir brought mind to the *taiga*
Now there is light in the *taiga*
Where was it that Vladimir lived?

SPRING FESTIVALS



TOM HARRISSON

INDUSTRIAL SPRING

CASUAL visitors find Worktown lovely, smoke hazing its angle in the gentle basin of encircling moors. But, even to Observers spending a year, the moors are bitterly cold. Of forty-two Southerners who came up to work with us in winter, thirty-nine found Worktown 'ugly,' 'awful,' often intolerable. In winter you are living in a town without greenery or unindustrial life. Only on Sundays is there the opportunity for adult workers to get out of the sprawling town and walk during daylight, and then the trams do not run until the afternoon. No wonder that you forget the country around. Through summer people scarcely use the moors, in a way that seems inexplicable to Southerners. And visitors also know nothing of the great lawsuit against the men who determined to establish a right of way across the moor, but were vindictively fought through all the courts, with results financially disastrous. To-day, the tradition of that case is still strong, and to Southern sophisticates, any country walk with a Workowner is liable to be uncomfortable because of the constant worry as to whether or no this way is trespassing. Off the few paths, the moors are closely protected for the autumn festival of Grouse Shooting.

For these and other reasons, modern Worktown is a place where the seasons matter comparatively little. At work in the tropical heat of the cotton mills there is no difference. At play, Workowners find everyday outlets within the town, especially its football stadium, cinemas, 304 pubs.

But while the seasons in fact cease to have recognized significance, they are still a major factor. The seasons determine whole fields of Worktown behaviour, which is thus based on a pre-industrial rhythm, now often illogical and uneconomic. The whole year is hinged on seasonal rites whose direct function (whether propitiation, religious belief, harvest allocation) have long since been forgotten by the masses, but still controls the buying of clothes, booze-ups, marriage and morality, sport, foods, time and hope. Here we cannot go into all the aspects (they will be dealt with in our forthcoming book 'How Religion works and doesn't'), but shall isolate a few from the festival of spring, of the year re-born, the seed sown, the migrants

returned. Remembering that not one person in a hundred in Worktown can tell the difference between swallows and martins, nor distinguish sprouting corn from barley. That is not now their business.

When does spring start in Worktown?

Said a millworking girl:

'When the trees are in bud.' But another, asked about birds and flowers, do they have anything to do with spring, answered, 'I don't see enough of either of them to have an opinion.' Middle-class and some working-class people have a set answer, as put by this artisan, 'Twenty-first of March. I know because I was told when a boy by a Catholic who was a coal merchant that Easter Sunday is the first Sunday after the first full moon after the first day of spring.' Easter emerges as a diagnostic character, the day which celebrates the resurrection of Our Lord. Few have thought why this date varies so widely from year to year when the date of his birth remains fixed.

Worktown institutions showed their first spring response on January 5th, when shops had all taken down Christmas signs and several had already SPRING SALES and SPRING BARGAINS. And on February 14th, the principal Unitarian Chapel's Wayside Pulpit became flower conscious and anticipated the annual confusion with:

GOD GAVE HIS CHILDREN MEMORY, THAT IN LIFE'S GARDEN THERE MAY
BE JUNE ROSES IN DECEMBER.

On March 16th, the local paper, which reaches 96 per cent of Worktown homes, is owned by the biggest local grouse-lover, had a large SPRING ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT. That gave the signal. Next day two dress-makers have huge vases of artificial myth-flowers in window, and the first time this year the word spring gets particular application: SPRING SUITINGS, EARLY SPRING SHOW. SKIRTS FOR SPRING. SPRING POINTS. SILKS FOR SPRING, and so on.

Lent actually kicks off with two boys and two girls swinging down Settle Street early on the morning of March 1st, singing at high-screech:

'Pancake Tuesday is a very happy day.
If you don't give us a holiday we'll aw run away
Eating tawfy, cracking nuts,
Stuffing pancakes deawn awr guts.'

All Worktown kids know this, sing it, only on this day—as survival of old custom of door to door singing for gifts.

There is also a traditional heavy consumption of home-made toffee. But of belief, all that survives in Worktown is that it is unlucky not to eat pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, and (decreasingly) that you must

eat one pancake before the next one is finished and turned. If not, your face is to be black with ashes. Strong still is the custom of leaving up the Christmas holly and mistletoe until Shrove Tuesday, and then burning them, though in most homes the resultant fire is no longer used for cooking the pancakes—owing to gas. But next day is the big day for ashes. Ash Wednesday marks the replacement of feasting by fasting. This day the prayer book appoints the *Commination Service*, otherwise called 'Denouncing of God's Anger and Judgments against Sinners.' But the observance was characteristically ignored in six Anglican churches visited. One, high Anglo-Catholic, specially advertised the service for 8.45 a.m. A middle-aged woman, an *Observer* and two priests formed the consequent congregation. It was taken as straight *Matins* (Psalm 6: 32, 38, *Isaiah* 58, no hymn, and the *Commination* features were not touched at all). Concluded at 9.8 a.m. and went straight on into *Litany*, after which the bell rings, at 9.17, and by 9.30 twenty-two people in church for *Communion*.

Thus Lent is introduced for Anglicans. Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists have no such obligations.

Their ideological attitude to Lent is well put by a Congregational minister whose church does nothing about Lent, though he remarks, 'This is a blank time as far as social life is concerned.' He says he occasionally refers to Lent in sermons; but 'I think most ministers feel it's absolutely valueless giving up something in Lent just because it's Lent.' The newer fundamentalist sects, such as Beulah, Hebron, Bethel and Holiness, who are packing their churches by a revolt against complacency parallel to the (now-established) Nonconformist one of Wesley's 'time,' go much further, as suggested by a Holiness minister. He said: 'I'd rather keep them at a Lenten atmosphere all the year round. Rather we tend to *discourage* the sort of thing that happens in Lent—give up chocolates and buy a new hat. We believe that's hypocrisy *pure and simple*.' They do nothing about Shrove Tuesday or Ash Wednesday, but in past years have adopted the Anglican practice of a series of Lenten lectures on Wednesday nights, successive years 'The Sermon on the Mount,' 'The Seven Deadly Sins,' 'Friends of the Spirit,' 'The Cross.' This year a special series by missionary visitors.

But so far this has been about church angles. Because they are the established ones. Though to-day in Worktown only one in twelve of the population go to church, the influences of church ramify into every part of life. Religion is almost essential for the successful local politician. Religion determines the shape of the week as it does the year. Religion stops the trams running Sunday mornings, annoys

large portions of the people by its early morning bells instead. But annoyed or not, those, the majority who are negative in church attitudes (very few are 'atheists'), are directly affected in habit. For example, eight out of the ten give up something in Lent—foods first, smoking second, sweets third, dancing fourth (1937). Observers investigated shop sales as Lent came in; on the evening of Shrove Tuesday, last night for general free leisure-pleasure feeling, one Observer went round the cinemas, got this:

Manager of Hippodrome. Says crowd is bigger than usual for Tuesdays. He says 'The Edge of the World' is exceptionally good film, which explains it. Obs. suggests last night before Lent, is that a factor. He had no thought of that, says No. (Later in week, same man tells another Obs. 'Edge of the World' has not done well.)

Manager of Embassy. Says sold out, except for standing room at 9d. 'Long time since I've said that on a Tuesday.' Mentioned Lent to him. He said it was not Lent, because the film he was showing was specially good, 'The Count of Monte Cristo'—'the best in town.'

Manager of Capitol said 'House is full.' Obs. asked if this due to to-morrow being start of Lent. He said, 'What do you mean by that?' Explained. He said, 'I don't think it is that. I'm showing two good films, exclusive.'

Business men who have no knowledge of Lent reject the idea of its influence. The real process is illuminated by an interview two days later with the *Manager of the Odeon Cinema*:

He said that on Tuesday as compared with a normal Tuesday of the year, 'Well, compared with the previous Tuesday, when we had a very good film showing, "Victoria the Great" this Tuesday had a bigger attendance, though we are showing a poorer film.' Asked the reason, he gave 'Last night before Lent.' Obs. told him that this was interesting, as all other managers of cinemas had found a similar increase but did not associate it with Lent. The Odeon manager laughed and said if the same question had been asked him on Wednesday, he could not have given the reason. He said that on this Thursday he was talking to the Manager of the Tramways, and a reporter of the *Worktown Evening News* and Tramways Manager asked if he was busy Monday or Tuesday, and if so had he had a drop on Wednesday and Thursday. Odeon said 'Yes,' whereupon Tramways said there had been large decrease in the takings of trams since Tuesday evening—even on the outskirts of the town. 'The public were simply not coming into Worktown.' The reporter then said, 'Don't you two realize that Lent commenced on Wednesday?' It was only as result of this that Odeon Manager gave above answer to observer's inquiry. . . .

In shops the results are parallel, the keepers similarly opinioned. Two incidents ruffle the theoretical calm of these weeks.

On March 17th, St. Patrick's Day. St. Patrick's Eve gives the Catholics their ritual relapse. A big dance, 'Full Bar,' tickets 3s., and a good time. Observer entering was greeted by barmaid: 'Oh, my arse is itching.' Girls outnumber boys 5:2, most wearing a piece of shamrock—imported specially from Ireland, distributed at mass. By midnight people were urinating in the washbasins, young couples necking passionately in the bar, two young women passed out on the floor, and one of the priests going round with sprigs of shamrock and packet of pins, sticking pins lightly into each girl's shoulder as put shamrock on, amidst much giggling, until eventually he stuck one piece firmly into a fat girl's posterior.

More widespread is Simnel Sunday, fourth one in Lent, on which all eat the large, slabby, circular, shilling a pound fruit and spice Simnel Cakes, eaten on no other day. Traditionally these cakes were given by child to mother. That has gone, but the churches still widely celebrate this as Mothering Sunday, and local poets even break into song specially for the occasion (1938):

Greetings to you, dear Mother, this day
 And violets fresh from the wood;
 Tied with a ribbon of blue so gay,
 And sweet with the fragrance of love.

While outside churches notices suggest:

Mothering Sunday
 March 25 at 2.45
 Special Singing by the Mothers' Union
 JOIN US IN THANKING
 GOD FOR MOTHER

And at this season, too, comes another festival which shifts the family pattern. On April Fool's Day in Worktown nine-tenths of the fools concerned kids; most were done by them on adults and slightly more by boys than girls. Under-fifteens distributed fool-favours thus:

<i>Against</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Father	31
Brother	11
Sister	11
Mother	9
Grandfather	6
Teacher	3

Against 'other kids' another 28 per cent, some of which are surely brothers and sisters. Kids play slightly more against their own generation than against their elders, but easily most at father (boys and girls do this equally). Only a fraction are aimed at elders unrelated to the hoaxter, of whom the teacher (constantly identified with mother in kids' drawings) is the main butt. The letter hoax is popular for teachers, and this girl of twelve sent this letter to teacher last year, grandfather this:

The drake is on the pond
The ducks are on the pool
The one who opens this
Is a big April Fool.

Talk with a gang of kids gives a general impression:

One had told a girl 'Go to pork shop.' And another had said to mother, 'Look at the fire.' The end to all these was the same, they said, i.e., shout of 'You big April Fool.' Big laugh was when one boy told how he had said 'Look at that car coming,' and the car was really a pram.

Similarly, five little girls, seven to eleven, on a bench in the park with a boy of three, too small to understand while they gigglingly fool at him:

'Look, there's something wrong with your coat.'
'Look, your nose is gone.'
'Look, your ears are gone.'

The main heads of hoaxes:

<i>Hoax about</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Look-at-that	.. 68
False calls	.. 13
False errands	.. 11
Letters	.. 2

The simple finger-look was far the commonest hoax—holding up a finger, preferably just behind the person's eye, and shouting, 'Ooh, look here.' Second commonest is telling someone to look at a mouse, thus:

Girl: 'There's a mouse in t'house.'

Father: 'Where?'

Girl: 'You gert big April Fool.'

While in the caller class perhaps the most perfect, as commentary on Worktown generally, was the one proudly related by the ten year old boy who woke his younger brother and got him out of bed and

downstairs as a 'Gert big April Fool' by telling him that there were two eggs for breakfast.

The old and childless are out of touch with this insult-oedipus-whoopee, and they mostly confirm the view of a man, age sixty-nine, who said:

'They used to make something on't, but it's nothing now. The back's broken now. You'll never see the same jollification now as we used to. But of course it were only for kids. It doesn't appeal to our sort. Everybody seems to have more on their plate than they can chew nowadays. It's all fixed up. All the railway lines and no traffic going over 'em. You'll never have the same jollification now as I used to have.'

Actually, 16 per cent of fools recorded were done by adults, mostly men.

Mother sent son, ten, out to back to find coal shovel. Not there. He came back, said so. She: 'You April Fool.'

Father told his son, nine, he had bought him a new bike. Son rushes downstairs, to find 'It was an April Fool.'

Around these three special days, the forty Lenten ones flow evenly, throwing a spotlight ahead to Easter, hearty meals, meaty rebirth. Lenten economy, and its sanction on non-hospitality, means extra saving and accumulated spend-wish. And the biggest outlet for that is *clothes*. Nearly every good Worktown buyer buys new clothes now. Under the doors are shoved circulars like:

Dear Sir,

It has always been our custom at this time of year to write and inform you, as one of our valued customers, of our intentions for the Spring. . . .

Suits tailored from these special cloths, and tailored to your satisfaction, are obtainable as low as 50s., cut, sewn and supervised by London-trained craftsmen.

The mass of Worktown suits cost less than that, and the main way of buying them is through the club cheque system, on which you make an initial payment of a shilling in the pound, get cheques for as many pounds as you like, and goods at the shops for these cheques —this special currency far exceeds the treasury sort in a great many Worktown shops—paying back a shilling per pound a week for twenty weeks. Ideally, the system for the Worktown male is this:

- (i) Every spring you buy one new outfit.
- (ii) The outfit that was new last year is now Saturday-second-best.

- (iii) The outfit new the year before is now working kit.
- (iv) To rag-bones man, whose business booms too.

Universally accepted in Worktown are two sayings:

- 1. 'Never cast a clout till May is out.'
- 2. 'Something new for Easter or the crows will shit on you.'

New curtains too, and a new inner home. 'Spring cleaning' must be done before Easter, but after 'Alice Soper's Day' (St. Valentine's), says superstition here. Every home spring cleans. Room after room, starting usually from top front, is turned out, pictures down, walls scrubbed, the process taking up to two weeks, infuriating husbands: 'The wife's a b——r to change the beds round. She doesn't cook proper meals, goes straight on through it. Nothing can stop her.'

In upper class homes charladies keep it up, and reach maximum earnings on their usual 10d. an hour. We asked why people cleaned homes at this special time. Some answers were:

- 'When it's warm enough to mess about in the bedrooms.'
- 'Directly a bit of sun gets into the house.'
- 'When the air's so you don't smell the soot so much.'
- 'The sunlight begins to make you see things.'
- 'Well, it's the daylight and you don't like to be shown up.'

Communal carpet beating in the backyard is the highspot. And anyone who cares to study the rich anthropological literature will see many parallels with spring beating, and exorcizing of winter spirits all over the world. Exactly at this time, too, and with regularity, two children's games reappear on the seasonal band, skipping and tops.

Skipping ropes cost from 2d. to 1/6 (bells on). While individuals can and do skip solo, the most striking role is social. And the most popular social form 'Cook's in the Kitchen,' when two hold the rope-ends, others line up behind one another, and each in turn skip the whirling rope one turn of the rhyme which all sing:

'Cook's in the kitchen doin' a bit o' stitchin'
In comes the bogey man and knocks her OUT.'

Middle-classites vary it:

'As I was in the pantry talking to my auntie
In came a bogey man and knocked me OUT.'

Other main type is skipping to action words:

I am a girl guide dressed in blue
 These are the actions that I have to do
 Salute to the king, bow to the queen
 And turn my back on the little boy in green.'

With alternative last words 'My back on the ABC.' Only one business seems to have got into skipping rhymes here, and it does itself a lot of good too:

Crawford's biscuits penny per pack
 When you pull them they go crack.

The strictly limited spring season of tops and whips is even more marked in Worktown (March 13th, 1937, March 15th, 1938), as it was long ago in London, where the boys had doggerel:

Tops are in. Spin 'em agin.
 Dumps are out. Smuggin' about.

Top seasonality is passed on from year to year, kid to kid. But the wholesale travellers remind the shopkeepers to remind the kids by putting the proper toys in the window to remind. Mrs. Grier keeps a crowded corner shop, says:

'The traveller just comes in—and says it's about time for marbles or whatever it is. . . . You don't need to know the seasons. The traveller trots out the regular popular lines. There's travellers who remind you of every mortal thing. I haven't seen tops and whips started in this street. But it's the time Easter. If it's a nicer floor (macadam street) you'll find it about spring. Spring. You can feel it in the air. People are not sniffering. You say *HELLO*, Spring is here, where you hear the starlings. And you see the kiddies start frisking about like lambs with skipping ropes.'

So we may see through the simple Worktown spring cross-currents which persist primarily linked to Christian beliefs and buildings, but ramify out into all aspects of life, especially into diet, special foods, and continually into children's games. It is as if, in 1939, the parents are living their play lives almost wholly in industrialism, while their children live on in another and older rhythm, near the earth and its turnings. On all of them, the gentle touch of profit interest shades in the texture and pull of the surviving rite.

These conflicts are clear, too, in the final stages of spring, St. George's Day, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and crucial Good Friday, when the Salvation Army marching through the streets proclaim with drum and cymbal:

I thirst, Thou wounded Lamb of God,
 To wash me in Thy cleansing Blood,
 To dwell within Thy wounds: then pain
 Is sweet, and life or death is gain.

The Three Hours' Services and Stations of the Cross need not be detailed. But affecting everyone is, once more, a special food, the Hot Cross Bun. Always called that, and advertised in every shop window with posters supplied by the Yeast combines showing the Hot Cross, about 70 per cent of the shops sell buns which are triangular and have no cross at all. This is said to be the real Worktown type, and it links nicely to the well-known arguments about the derivation of *bun* from *boun*, bull, horns of which were inscribed on cakes offered to the Assyrian goddess Astarte, possible origin word for Easter.

It is much more difficult to make the triangular crossless buns—the dough has to be specially lapped, but thousands are made and everyone partakes.

A typical Worktown worker wrote his impressions of this climax to the year and its resurrection:

Good Friday, hot cross buns very welcome for one day a year.
 Children naturally look forward to Easter on account of

Chocolate which is a treat to them.

Eggs are usually given them on rising.

Young children usually receive egg with chicken on.

Other children from about four years of age usually have their Initials engraved in White Toffee.

Argument will occur if eggs not of similar size.

Mother will get as much enjoyment from this festivity as the children.
 Father says nowt but prefers his beer.

Every shop that ever sells chocolate has Easter eggs in its window for a fortnight before. Gay colours, deep red and blues especially, numerous models of baby chickens, ducklings, baby rabbits and March Hares. Far and away the biggest sponsor of this Easter present-giving are the Quaker interests, Cadbury and Rowntree.

Worktown's numerous religious Egg Services deal only with real eggs, whereas nowadays the present eggs given almost exclusively by adults to children are chocolate. The Church has canalized the giving of ordinary eggs into its own direction, Cadbury's have modified the family giving into a symbolism which still keeps the chick or bunny rabbit as spring signs—large eggs with elaborate sugar flowers are also

becoming increasingly popular in Worktown in recent years. Therefore the custom of children blacking their faces and going from house to house begging for eggs, which still survives in other forms for May Day and Guy Fawkes, has practically disappeared, though 'Pace Egging' as it was called is still a phrase used even by kids of nine writing essays on Easter at an Elementary School.

'If this Easter game is played as it was a few centuries ago it is very good and exciting. You dress in some idiotic clothes and go to your neighbour's front door. When the door is answered the Pace Egger says "Pace Egg."

'The neighbour is supposed to give the boys and girls an Easter Egg or a few coppers, and so this game proceeds.'

The nowadays form is described by another:

'Every year a number of children group together and they get a basket and go round to all the people in their house and their neighbours and ask for an egg. After they have got a great number of eggs they take them to the inf. And hospitals.'

Important in Pace Egging was the colouring of the egg-shells by boiling in tea, coffee, etc. And this custom still survives strikingly at the cotton town nearest to Worktown and most similar to Worktown. Here every Easter Monday, approximately 50,000 people assemble in the main park each year, most of them with children, and all the children with their coloured eggs; though oranges are increasingly a substitute. In this park there is a very long steep bank, and down this bank all afternoon literally thousands of children roll eggs and oranges, and chocolate eggs, coconuts and apples too. The six Observers who have studied this ceremony, are all agreed that it is unique in the way in which everyone gets together for an afternoon simply to mess about, and without any thought of competition—nearly all the egg-rolling consists of individuals or groups rolling their eggs down over and over again, and there is no sort of racing or competition. Many family groups bring their paraphernalia in small fancy baskets, reserved for this occasion. As one Observer summed up: 'It was most noticeable that most had no toys whatever except for balls and ball substitutes, and skipping ropes.' There were only two policemen in the whole park, one clergyman, no rubbish bins. By evening as people began to go away, the morning's grass was a universe of paper and peel.

There is no need to elaborate on the tremendous role of the egg in

the spring festivals of almost every country and every period in human history, or the association of the rolling with stone—from the tomb and Resurrection. The egg is the oldest symbol of the world's rebirth and cyclic fertility.

To children too, Easter Holiday is the first breakaway from months of solid sooted Worktown. Here is what a middle-class child, aged ten, wrote for us:

'On Easter I went a walk before breakfast with my father over Lindale Fell and saw a robin with feathers in its beak and it flew into a crack in a wall. We marked this spot and after the robin had gone we went to look and found part of a nest that it was building. At ten o'clock in the morning we walked down to Grange to meet my sister's friend who was coming to stay for a few days, then we walked along the promenade to the cafe where I had an ice cream, then we walked into town where I bought a walking stick to hike with. In the afternoon Auntie, Joan, Mary Williamson (Joan's friend), and myself went to the top of Hampsfell. When we were on the top I asked a gentleman the way down into Grange. When we arrived we found father at the station and he took us back to Lindale. I rolled my coloured egg down a slope at the back of the farm. After tea we saw daddy off home then we played hockey until it was time for bed.'

And a working-class boy; typically travelling to nearby town:

'We went to Manchester. I couldn't say which part—we got on the train. We went and saw that hen show. You know, Easter Farm, in Lewis's. We go to Salford sometimes, when we can afford it. Like to see the shops.'

And so the rhythm of the year swings slowly into summer. Easter marks the climax of spring. May Day the end of it. Still there are no nature's colours in the trees, and no bird sings. There is no Labour Party demonstration, though a big horse procession still parades the streets as per tradition. And the children, once more the children, black their faces and dance over grease marks.

To this the children in back streets and main streets between the long rows of houses and amongst often overflowing ashcans and privies, boys dressed as girls, girls with old sacks or discarded curtains as trains, collect pennies—illegally, but the police let them do it even in town centre. Sing.

And inevitably they chorus round the curtain-trailed 'Queen':

'She is the Queen of the May—ay—ay, the May—ay—ay,
In the month of May.
The flowers, the flowers grow everywhere, everywhere,
The flowers they grow everywhere
In the beautiful month of May.'

To me, at least, this seems the final festival of spring, its deep industrial irony. And thence we step into the summer, with the soot falling from long-boned cotton-factory fingers, churning out calico from a climate that cares least for seasons, has been selected as ideal for shirt-making for that very reason.

RODNEY GALLOP

SAINTS AND PLOUGHES IN MEXICO

SPRING on the high tableland of Mexico is a note without overtones, a fact shorn of its implications. Here, in Latitude 20° North, the wheel of the year turns almost imperceptibly, the four spokes of the seasons invisible. At the most the rains and an extra hour or two of daylight differentiate June from December. And on the rains turns the cycle of works and days.

There are parts of Mexico, in the tangled sierras on the shores of the Gulf, where it never stops raining, where, as the saying goes, you should travel in the wet season rather than the dry, since in the former it rains every afternoon while in the latter it rains all and every day. Up at 8,000 feet we are high above those vaporous clouds which creep up into the canyons from the hot country of Vera Cruz. Here the rains begin on 1st May and are turned off like a tap on 4th October, St. Francis's Day, when strong winds from the North, the *cordonazo de San Francisco* give the sullen storm clouds the 'belting' of their name with a vigour unsuspected in the Poverello of Assisi. In Mexico, however, the Saints, like all things European, have suffered a sea-change. St. Peter likes to see blood flow in his honour; St. Martin takes a strange delight in corn-dolls cut from bark-paper; St. James 'lends his horse' to cattle-thieves; and St. Isidore, Patron Saint of Madrid, has turned, as we shall see, into a *charro* horseman of the purest Mexican breed.

Yet the first rains bring a hint of spring into the month of flowery May. In the morning the sun rises clear behind the snowfields on the great volcanoes, freed at last from the dusty haze of March and April. On its heels thunderclouds gather, darken in the afternoon and discharge their showers on the thirsty earth. The light has a new-washed brilliance. If the evergreens are no greener, and the flowers on the floating gardens of Xochimilco and Mixquic no brighter than they have been in January a thin, green stubble of grass has been drawn out of the parched and grudging soil. The omen has been fulfilled of those little saucers filled with inch-high sprouting corn which we saw at Easter adorning the table of the Last Supper in the Passion Play, themselves commemorating a more ancient Passion, the death and revival of vegetation.

It was on a May morning that we went to Metepec. At first we followed the tarred high-road which leads from Mexico City westwards to Guadalajara and will eventually link the capital with California. The road climbs steeply through pine-woods and high pastures, crossing the Sierra de las Cruces 10,000 feet above the sea, snatching away the last glimpse of Anahuac and Montezuma's lake-side capital of Tenochtitlan and, like a change of lantern-slides, replacing it with the spacious plain of Toluca bounded on the west by snowy Xian-tecatl. Down again and out across the plain the road runs between reed-beds and lush green meadows watered by the Rio Lerma.

To the north lie villages of the Otomi and Mazahua Indians, their sonorous names, Santiago Temoaya, San Bartolo Otzolotepec, San Francisco Xonacatlan paying tribute to their successive conquerors, Aztec and Spanish. To the south the blood is more mixed, half-breeds of predominantly Indian blood speaking no tongue but Spanish and despising the tiny remnant of the Ocuiltecs, that lost tribe rediscovered by Robert Weitlaner. A wave of fir-clad hills surges on the southern horizon, then falls away to lower, hotter country, to Chalma where the people of the plain congregate in pilgrimage at the beginning of Lent.

Just short of Toluca we turned to the left. The road became unspeakable, but fortunately only a few miles separated us from Metepec, the *mestizo* village for which we were bound. Metepec is an Aztec name, meaning the 'hill of the magueys' and taken from the conical monticule against which the village huddles as though for support, a cluster of low *adobe* houses dominated by the tall tower of a baroque church. The hill still shows the spiked silhouettes of the maguey aloe, the 'green cow' from which the Indians derived all that they most needed, from clothing to the sour-sweet drink of *pulque*. All, that is to say, except corn, the food that preconditioned the whole life of pre-Columbian America, and which is still cultivated to-day in the knowledge that a failure of the harvest would spread famine and death through the land.

Here, more than elsewhere, bread, or rather the flat, unleavened *tortilla* griddle-cake, is life itself, and no precaution is neglected, no traditional ritual left undone to safeguard the harvest.

So to-day, when three weeks of rain had darkened the dun colour of the earth to a rich chocolate, summoning the plough from its enforced idleness, no ploughman was to be seen in the fields on either side of the road. It was the first Tuesday after St. Isidore's Day, and by immemorial custom they had gathered in the village for the *fiesta de los locos de San Isidro*, St. Isidore's Fools.

As we threaded our way towards the centre of the village nothing

at first showed that this was no ordinary market-day. There was nothing unusual in the crowded streets; the men, surging from the pulque-shops, in white cottons and *ponchos* of brown and cream from Tianguistengo, their faces pools of ambiguous shadow beneath broad sombreros, the bright pin-points in the black pupils of their eyes gleaming like candles in darkness; the women passing with baskets on their arms or squatting beside their wares in the market-place, bare-headed, the blue *rebozo* shawl round their shoulders, their jet-black hair moulding the curved backs of their heads and falling in long pig-tails. Only in the broad space before the churchyard gate were new colours and new patterns embroidered on this familiar tapestry. Here the ploughmen were gathered with their teams of oxen, decked as for some fantastic Carnival.

Each pair of oxen was yoked to a plough in charge of two men. On the backs of some of the oxen were spread table-cloths or bed-covers of silk or lace; others had coloured-paper squares with cut-out designs, stars or rosettes, pasted on their flanks, and sashes girt about their middles. One wore a white cloth with rose-petals cunningly applied so that they curled up like living flowers. Their horns were painted gold or swathed with coloured paper. Round their necks hung, not the flowery wreaths of the European sacrificial ox, but garlands of maize cobs or of *tamales* of dough wrapped in maize leaves. Only in one delightful exception were these with true Mexican incongruity supplanted by empty beer and mineral water bottles.

No less lavish was the decoration on the yokes. Adorned with silver paper, coloured rosettes or Mexican flags, they served in some cases to support upright boards bearing naïve inscriptions in honour of the Saint, picked out in grains of maize or rice, in squash and melon seeds and little beans, gummed or painstakingly sewn on to paper. One of them bore a life-like picture of the Saint in this ungrateful medium. Another yoke-portrait of San Isidro had the face and hands painted and the miniature clothes applied on to the picture.

Still more varied were the costumes of the human participants. Of the two men in charge of each yoke, one represented the *gañan* or ploughman and the other his *tlacualera*, his wife, that is to say the woman who brings him his meals out in the fields in a *tlacual* gourd. The men wore Indian reed-cloaks or those assemblages of rags preferred of Carnival in many lands. Their principal disguise consisted in masks, many of them of great age, and inexhaustible in their variety. Most were of wood, carved and painted into the distorted faces seen at Alpine Carnival runnings, such as the Schemen of Imst. There were devil masks, too, and others more obviously theriomorphic, the grey

A Masked Dancer from Metepec



Rodney Gallop.

Rodney Gall



mask of a goat complete with horns, the tanned skin of a badger with slits for eyes and nose and with, for a further touch of incongruity, a superimposed pair of spectacles. Their grotesque countenances were crowned with headgear out-doing even the normal exuberance of the Mexican *sombrero* in their fantastic width and the height of their peaks.

As compared with their men, the 'women' were modestly attired. Few of them wore masks. Most had shawls round their heads and nestling in the folds a doll-baby or a stuffed skunk which with shrill, assumed voices and ribald remarks, they pushed into the faces of the onlookers.

Although quite a hundred of these yokes must have gathered, it was apparent that nothing further was going to happen for the present, and we entered the churchyard. The church is a well-proportioned baroque building with elaborate stucco work on the west front and scroll mouldings cutting the sky-line. The churchyard is surrounded with a stone wall, scolloped out between pilasters each supporting a classical urn. Scolloping, urns and all go curling up and over the high, three-arched gateway.

The stillness within the church seemed a tacit rebuke to the clamour outside. A few shrouded figures knelt motionless in prayer. A group of little Indian girls with pilgrim staffs and gourds turned and twisted in religious dance, beneath the glassy eyes of twenty gilt gesso St. Isidores in twenty miniature altars brought in on men's backs from outlying villages, and set in a double row on each side of the chancel. The same painstaking care had gone to the adornment of each Saint, the frame festooned with flowers, strung with maize-cobs white, red and black, beans and *gorditos*, little cakes of maize-flour.

Next to the church, a transition between its soaring tower and the flat village roofs, was the two-storied presbytery, built round a square *patio* into which, as we emerged from the church, rode the *mayordomos* of the fiesta, clad in white and scarlet, bearing banners. Now, for the first time we caught sight of the priest, blessing the kneeling *mayordomos* and bestowing on each a little symbolic cake.

When this ceremony was over the general company at last got under way and began to lumber into the churchyard for the annual benediction, following sunwise the course of the scolloped wall. As they reached the priest's house their grotesque faces peered upwards to behold at one window a life-size statue of St. Isidore in broad-brimmed *charro* hat, short coat and skin-tight trousers; at the next the priest with swinging censer and an umbrella to protect him now from the afternoon showers, now from the blinding gleams of sunshine; and at a third the sacristan with a basket of *tamales* and *gorditos*.

As each yoke paused to be asperged with holy water, as each ploughman held up his long goad that a *tamal* might be impaled upon it, they were withdrawn for a moment from the ribald spirit of carnival, only to re-enter it as, once past the church door, they followed round the further wall and out into the village square. For an hour or so they passed in bewildering succession, the rear brought up by little children on ponies and by a cart emblazoned with Mexican flags and the legend: *Viva Mexico!*, in which a live San Isidro, three or four years old, guided his toy oxen, in one hand a rosary, and in the other an ice-cream cornet white against his dusky cheeks. The clouds had cleared and the sun came slanting over the volcano as the tail of the procession wound through the streets and out into the fields to beat the bounds and bring the benison of fertility to the fallow earth.

Nothing could be more typical than St. Isidore's Fools of that duality of human values which is Mexico's most engaging quality, begotten of the intermarriage of two heritages. On the one hand stands the timeless spirit of the Amerind races: on the other, the ways of Europe with the tart, regional flavour of Spain or that more generalized quality which changes less with countries than with centuries. The ingredients could scarcely be more contrasted. Yet somehow there has been fusion, and if integration is not everywhere complete it will with time be perfected. For all its solid wedges of pure Indians, for all its scattered groups of whites secure in their self-bestowed appellation of *gente de razón* (people of reason), Mexico is moving towards the ultimate goal of a uniform half-breed population with a distinct *mestizo* culture. It is a process of chemical change, and the final product will be no mere mixture, no brindled hybrid, but a true compound not to be defined by the sum total of its parts.

All this may seem to have little enough to do with St. Isidore's Fools, but in reality it is implicit in their parade. The conquest of New Spain did not involve, like that of North America, the annihilation of the Indian. It was a process of assimilation. So Mexican culture is to some extent an Indian civilization modified by Europe and to an equal extent a European civilization which has been transformed by its transplantation to alien soil. There is much in the Spring Festival of Metepec which could be explained by ancient Indian corn-cults. Yet there is nothing in it which could not be defined in terms of European mumblings. To analyse it, apportioning its elements now to one tradition, now to another, would be otiose even if it were possible. Oxen, of course, are foreign to a pattern of life which knew no domestic animals, just as ploughs are an innovation among a race who for centuries were content with the planting-stick. Yet, on the other

hand, masks, whether of perishable wood or of imperishable stone, gold or jade, were an essential feature of ancient Mexican religion, as were seasonal festivities aimed at bringing rain, appeasing the gods and generally ensuring that fertility on which human life depends. In the beginning was not the word, but the prey of the hunter. Then came the ear of corn, in America painfully developed out of the wild maize called *teocentli*, food of the gods, thus allowing hunting tribes to cease their wanderings and devote themselves to the arts of settled life. Then came the word, if by the word we mean belief, ritual, religion.

In post-Conquest Mexico as in Europe in the Dark Ages the Church of Rome built not on the shifting sands of incredulity but on the firm rock of established custom. Old habits and beliefs were endowed with new explanations and transformed to meet new requirements. The cross of Tlaloc and Quetzalcoatl symbolizing the four winds from the four quarters of the earth, was merged in another cross with a more esoteric significance. All over sixteenth and seventeenth century Mexico the erosion of Christianity ate into the 'rich and genuine ore of ancient manners', so that if the old ways at times show through with artless transparency, it is rare indeed to find an unworked virgin vein.

Yet in the last resort, the ways of man are alike all the world over. We eat, we drink, we hunt, we plant, we beget, and in our comings and goings, in the critical periods of our life and labours, we harness in our simplicity the imagined forces of stylized gesture and time-consecrated ritual. Ploughmen of Metepec, Plough Stots of East Anglia, Plough ritualists of Skyros and the whole motley crew of spring mummers in all lands are brothers under their variously tinted skins. And of that essential brotherhood no more potent symbols could be found than the ploughs, the decorated oxen, and, reducing them to their ultimate essential, the corn-cobs of Metepec.

JEAN GONO

THE BREAD-BAKING

Translated from the French by John Rodker

ABOUT five on Saturday morning, while it was still dark, the sound of a long iron rake was heard ringing against stone. It seemed like some high-pitched bell, but then you began to think, 'No, it's not a bell, but what can it be?' Whereupon, you woke. There, in the village square, they were raking out the communal oven. The embers had been drawn—you could see them blazing away in the dark, and the oven stood clean for baking. Three or four women were standing about, amidst long cratches of dough, swaddled like giants' babies.

Later, it grows sunny, hot. The air is full of the smell of baking bread. At ten the children come out of school, but scamper off immediately to their homes. Not one remains to play in the square. Solitary and alone, little Nicolas goes off over the fields, for his home is the distant saw mill away by the stream. He goes lagging, stopping at times to look back. In this instant, nothing exists save the vast silence, and the smell of baking bread.

Then, seven women come into the street. It is chance that there happen to be seven. First, one at the end of the street, by the fields: then another outside the tobacconist's, a third by the grocer's and so on. As though the hamlet were spilling its inhabitants out. On her head each balances a large basket. They walk slowly. The children follow. They are moving towards the oven. It is Saturday morning. They are going to draw the first big baking. Jacques' Luce takes hold of the handle and pulls the oven-door open. We haven't many birds in our parts at this time of the year, but all that remained flew into the near-by stunted maples, and started a sudden chorus of chirping. The children began shouting. A threnody of thin clear voices. Followed by the sound of men's voices, wanting to know why, and then the tramp of their feet, marching along to the oven. The women call to each other. So strong does the bread smell now. The children have grouped themselves at a distance, leaving the square free for their elders. The men go up to the circle of women, and Luce begins drawing the loaves with a long peel. The seven baskets lie ranged in front of the oven. Luce calls, Naomi, Rose, Virginie, Elisa, Pauline, Amicia (this last

the wife of an Italian stonemason settled among us), and adds 'Me,' as she drops a loaf into her own basket. The others, whenever their names are called, each take a loaf. The children speak in hushed voices. The men think it almost too well organized. There are twelve loaves to each woman. The bread crackles with heat in the baskets. And now Luce begins groping about with her peel. The children fall silent. They seem scarcely to breathe, and such is their absorption watching the mouth of the oven, that they constantly make small involuntary gestures.

'I don't see it,' says Luce.

Virginie goes closer, and gazes into the oven, with one big hand protecting her face.

'On the right!'

Luce thrusts in her peel. You can tell something has been caught. Then she pulls out a large fougasse coated with sugar. All begin shouting, the men, the children. The birds fly off to the fields. (Just by this little flurry of birds, you could tell how lonely and isolated we are. By merely following their flight you saw how close, how shut in by woods and mountains we were!) But oh, the rapture! A long, shiny, sugary fougasse, such as no one has seen for years! The children have talked of nothing but this for days past. And now the quince pies are drawn out. A ball of dough with a quince in the middle, smelling of hot fruit.

'Go for a basket!'

The children run shouting away, three here, one there, four into the distance, shouting like mad. The quince pies, being heavy, are placed first, then the fougasse on top. The children think it may fall, shift it about, and suddenly have started to quarrel.

'Come!' say the women.

The men move aside. Bearing the baskets of bread on their heads, the women begin to walk off. Everyone follows, the children carrying the fougasse and quince pies. The men, the other women. But no longer are the seven walking as they generally walk. Now, because of the baskets, they are forced to walk slow, swing their hips, plant each foot with care, and hold themselves straight. Thus, slowly, they go downhill through the village. Noon can be heard approaching as the Angelus rings out. Something stronger than ordinary hunger makes us seem starving hungry. Harvesting smells rise in our minds, we seem to be seeing the standing corn, the scythe and the sheaves. For the first time, we have done what we ought to have done. The whole hamlet smells of hot bread.

In the seven households with new bread that morning, they had

said: 'When the bread's baked we must ask them in for a drink, in return for lending their mills.'

So the Mayor had gone in search of Columa.

'It's our duty,' he says, 'seeing we're invited.'

And together they come to Amicia's door, for she it is who lives nearest.

'Oh, Salut!' says the husband, seeing them enter.

He is a foreigner (forced to fly from his country), always a trifle anxious where other men are concerned, a man who has long lost confidence in everything but his work, though flattered to see the Mayor in his house.

All sit, and Amicia fills the spirit glasses.

'Well?' says the Mayor, 'and how's that job over at St. Jean?'

'All right!' the mason answers, 'but I've had to knock off. They're out, getting up sand from the river.' (It was a sheep pen he was putting up for old Booss, near St. Jean, hard by the forest.) Booss had provided the corn, at the mason's special request, for the bread baked by Amicia.

'Well, good-bye now,' say both, 'there's still the others to visit.'

But Amicia steps forward, saying:

'Wait.'

An honest shame at what she is going to do makes her cheeks flame, for she comes from a land where all things are accompanied naturally with easy magnificent gestures. Yet she knows that here it isn't the custom, and yet she feels that, come what may, she must risk it, now that the wheat has spoken to her heart.

So she drops a curtsey in the style of her province (plucking her skirt to the right, plucking her skirt to the left, suddenly bending both knees and stamping one heel like a restless mule).

'One must accept,' she says, 'things that come from the heart.'

She rises to get two of the quince pies usually kept for the children, and these she gives to the men. The Mayor feels lost. He too has turned red. He looks at Columa. He thinks it is really most kind. Columa too, feels as lost. He thinks, really one can't help feeling touched.

It is a moving moment for all four. Amicia's lips tremble. She has given them the quince pies. The Mayor has taken them both. He says, 'Many, many thanks.'

Then he thinks he must give one to Columa, and does so.

'Me too!' says Columa.

And suddenly, neither they nor the others have any idea what to do next.

All four stand still, in the same silence.

They leave, but a change, an utter change, has come over them.

They arrive at Rose's house. Immediately all notice the change, and joy walks in at their heels.

'How handsome they've become,' she says, 'just look!'

They are handed something to drink, people clap their shoulders, say thanks and thanks: but why, they wonder, when it is they themselves who need to be rendering thanks. Then they are given a couple of hunks of the fougasse. But now the Mayor knows what to do and hands one to Columna. Next, a bottle of sweet wine is given them. But now they have too much to carry.

'The youngster'll take it for you. Charles!'

A basket. Everything goes in. The youngster swings it up on his shoulder.

Onwards! Naomi's. They go in, sit down. Everyone seems shouting, man, wife, sister, grandfather and three daughters. The women bustle about the great kitchen. Cupboard doors bang. Glasses clink. The men come up from the cellar with bottles under their arms.

'It's a funny thing,' says the Mayor, 'to-day, we all seem to be wanting to say "thanks." It's nothing but thank-you all round.'

Meanwhile, the girls go off to the granary to collect some ears from the last year's harvest. Then, with a piece of hair-ribbon smelling of powder, they tie a bouquet.

Next, on to Luce. It was lucky the nut-mills belonged to the solidiest men in the village, for they happened to have better heads than most. Now Luce gives them a kiss. Pauline chatters. They drink some marc. They drink some dry wine. They drink some sweet. Virginie is the loveliest woman in the district. Elisa gives them a whole round loaf, which suddenly reminds them how extraordinary the whole business is! And there they are, suddenly drunk.

'Let's go to my house,' says the Mayor.

All rise.

'Everyone must be there!'

He orders the bugle to be blown in the street, and people begin asking, 'Why, what's the matter?'

'Come to my house,' says he.

Columna has slipped quietly away, steering carefully leg by leg.

He meets us hurrying to the call of the bugle.

'Come and give me a hand,' he says.

It was for shifting a barrel of wine. We needed a barrow. Four of us started to push it along, as though we were children.

People came out of their homes on their way to the Mayor's. The girls called one to the other. They came arm-in-arm, two, three, four, five, six, hastening from all sides to link up together, already singing and hopping from foot to foot. Jules passed us running.

'Hey!' we said, 'it's the wrong direction.'

'I'm going to find my concertina.'

'Why,' asks the Curé, 'what's the meaning of this all?'

'Come along too!'

'Monsieur le Curé,' said Charles, 'you're somebody! So this is what you should do. Go along to the school, tell teacher it's a holiday. From me, the Mayor. And bring her with you.'

He goes.

They return together. Teacher has tied a large moiré bow under her white chin, and the children are blocking the doorway.

'Come in, children!'

Warily, they enter the huge kitchen, crammed with people. Every one seems strange to them. They hardly know what to do. They look round for teacher. But now they cannot recognize her either. They go from one skirt to another, in search of their mother, like tiny kids in a herd of goats. At last they find her, but it isn't she, this woman is changed, altogether different from how they know her. Then the children bunch together in the darkest corner of the kitchen. Actually, they have been expecting something of the kind, and so it all seems natural. From where they sit, all they can see are corduroy trousers, skirts, boots and thick women's woollen stockings, red, blue, black and brown. The folds of the skirts swing, and the wide coloured borders, green, yellow, violet, red, begin to undulate. But now it is no longer a coloured border, but whatever one will: a snake, a runnel of water, a twist of grass that twines round the women's calves; twines and untwines as the woman rests on one foot or the other, or talks to right or to left, or clinks glasses, hither and yon, or finally raises her glass—all shouting at once—and then the skirt lifts slightly to the right and shows a little more of the calf. The children sit in the corner as though in a tiny nest on the ground. And when the trousers and skirts hem them too closely in, they begin pushing back with their tiny hands. At which they see a white face, round as the moon, look looming down. They, they sit in a little nest on the ground, with their satchels and drawing boards and bare knees, and the knobbly bits of their shoulder-blades like wings beginning to sprout. Actually nothing surprises them; not the Curé's arrival, nor that of teacher, wearing her large moiré iridescent bow, nor the multi-coloured snakes that swim to and fro mid the corduroy legs, the black and red calves, nor the noise, nor the smell of the wine, nor the wine being poured,

nor the wine being spilt, nor the dark hollow cry from the emptying barrel, nothing surprises them; not even their own enchanted solitude.

If none of all this had happened, then indeed they would have been surprised. They have been glad and content ever since morning, when following the lovely stride of the women, bearing their panniers of hot bread, at last they had seen the world turn into their own calm joyous world.

Suddenly, like a warning signal, they hear the concertina being squeezed to the very last drop. The men and women break away. The men get in line by the hearth, the women against the dresser. Dumpy Henri clammers up on the table with his instrument firmly grasped. He wants to start off with a waltz, but they say, 'Play *Primrose, Primrose*,' and he plays *Primrose*. It is an old song to which our people have been dancing ever since the days of their earliest ancestors. Then the winters were long, severe, and the homesteads were still scattered about in the forest. Winter meant solitude, sickness, dying, and each for himself and devil take the hindmost. Nothing warmed their hearts more than the first primroses, when the southern slopes suddenly throw off their ice. They had turned it into a song, a song which moved them to put forward now this leg, now that, and then to start dancing. He was playing *Primrose*. Solemn as a judge. With his arms curved wide in front of him and his big brawny hands slowly, delicately, caressing the notes on either side of the keyboard. He has bent his head, and his cheek all but touches the black breathing box.

Not a soul speaks, not a soul stirs. Suddenly something gives a swift rustle, like a flurry of tits in the branches. Ugly Marie has lifted her face. She has lost that sheep-like forehead, those dog-like lips. Now it is sheer delight to watch the pure dazzling blue that shines in her widening eyes. Her mouth opens, and sets an exact melodious note in the very midst of two notes which bear it away. She it is who moves like someone awakening. She comes out of the line. Her arms rise to her head. And her hands rest on her neck. She sings. She moves on, and her skirt can be heard, hitting against her knees. The sound of her feet, the sound of her skirt, the sound of her voice insinuate themselves into Henri's music. It is as though they are dancing together, though he does not budge from his chair, and his sad face hovers over the very pulse of the dancing. She, upright, close, stands there in the centre, stepping it bravely, with loins drawn taut, and face uplifted, submissively following or setting the pace, with interposed dance steps and never a false note, welded close to the player, as though by the iron chain of her voice. Suddenly he needs another woman, two, three, all of them, and the music turns into a long, long call. Then like a lash, it begins striking

out, now here, now there: Luce, Jeanne, Rose, Marthe, Lisa, Louise, Madeleine!

They come. Slowly. The line undulates as though it were a snake. Out of the line they dare not issue. Yet he needs them, every one of them. Each is necessary to him. Ugly Marie is still in the van, with her vast yearning that was first to summon its courage, and her voice which clangs like an iron ring. Now voices merge into hers. The room had been full. There had seemed no room for one other voice even, so utterly had Marie's filled every interstice in Henri's music. No room for other dance steps, other sounds of swishing skirts. And yet now there is room for everything, and each of them. Henri was right. They are all necessary to him. He calls. He draws them to him with wild notes that sound like the bleating of kids, three trembling notes that make the heart jump like a hand on a baby rabbit. The line of women breaks, they are advancing, they are singing, with knees striking against skirts. Then pounding feet, swishing skirts, all merge into the same music, as they advance towards the still dancing Marie, as she waits and sings and dances, on the same spot, with no jealousy at all, knowing he needs them all, all and the whole universe.

But more, for the music lashes the men. A tremor runs through them. They are waiting. And now Henri lets fly the whole keyboard of bass notes, notes full of joy, to the women who are singing *Primrose! Primrose!* and nobly the voices of the men make answer. It seemed there was no more room. But there is room still for them. They too were needed. It is better with them. They advance, the pounding grows louder, the floor begins shaking, the window panes clatter, the soot falls from the chimney, the ash flies abroad, and fear stalks in the stables: the cows are lowing, the horses are whinnying, the sheep are bleating, and the ram butts the door.

Virginie is lovely. Marie is as lovely. The men are glorious and strong. They are coming, they were needed. They pound on the floor, they lower their heads, they pound and lower their heads, as the ram does, as the he-goat, as the proud stallion, as though to break down all barriers, as though to break themselves free, as though to leap onwards. The women are lovely. They advance, retreat, hit their skirts with their knees, advance, retreat, hit their skirts, as though tearing themselves from entwining grasses, as though fleeing, reaching outwards, and fleeing again; as though held back by earth's entwining grasses, by bindweed, and bushes, and branches and the trees in the forest, and nothing, and themselves, like the ewe, and the she-goat and mare.

They are dancing the springtime.

HUGH MACDIARMID

THE CASE OF ALICE CARRUTHERS

ALICE CARRUTHERS was not only quite good-looking but a really nice, obliging, and capable girl—so they said, though it was difficult to see how they could possibly know. For there was no getting near her. She never spoke to anyone—until she was first spoken to, and then she only made the reply that remark called for, but never carried the conversation any further. She had no small talk and if not a positive distaste, at least a complete incapacity, for tittle-tattle. It wasn't that she was in any way sulky or vain or queer. On the contrary she was open-faced and clear-eyed, happy-natured if extraordinarily quiet-natured, kindly in disposition, and always willing to help in any way she could. But she never made the slightest advance of any kind. Naturally all her good qualities did not make up for this singular deficiency; in a little town like Whitshiels how on earth could people get on without 'personalities', back-biting, flippancy, easy vulgarity, and endless excitement and volubility about trifles. One might perhaps liken the effect she produced in that milieu to the use of verse in drama. The verse keeps the dialogue at a certain remove from actuality, while stressing the rhythm of speech—not that she ever gave any impression of calculation, of formality; it did not seem a matter of choice at all. She was, in a word, not 'innerly', and innerliness is the most prized quality down there—all over Scotland in fact—and any one who lacks it is a social outcast. But Alice was happier than most of these unfortunates; she was not 'outcast' very markedly or with any vindictiveness; she paddled her own canoe without ever colliding with any other in that press of craft and without any other ever colliding with hers, intentionally or otherwise. No mean feat!

Alice was not disliked as a child when the pressure to make one 'like everybody else' is most insistent and cruel; but she was generally alone—she was no other girl's bosom friend, and seldom to be seen linking along with any school-mates. And as a young woman she was more and more isolated. This did not sour her in the slightest. She was completely self-contained. People knew exactly where they had her all the time. She was always there—she never went out from herself to meet anybody else half-way or quarter-way or at all, but if they came in to her she was hospitable enough, she gave them what

she had to give, but never tried to keep them by playing up to them in any way. Take it or leave it; there she was. The consequence was they felt defrauded—felt that she was reserving her real self and only fobbing them off with an anteroom; it did not occur to them that if she gave them no more it was perhaps because she was unaware that she had any more—that if she was not entirely open to them it was because she had not yet explored herself. And she had never had a lover. She was thirty and assumed to be definitely on the shelf. It was a very curious case. She was exactly like the other girls—she gave herself no airs and graces; she did not criticize or dissociate herself from their mode of life; she did not feel superior to them any more than she felt inferior—only she wholly lacked this indispensable faculty of small pretences and insincerities, of conventional hypocrisies, which meant so much more to all the others than their genuine qualities, so much more that the latter could scarcely have been discerned at all by anyone who did not know them intimately. And as to love affairs, so far as external manifestations went, these partook of exactly the same nature as the rest of this social life in which she had no share—plus a little squalid danger. They depended upon a series of silly gambits and gambols—senseless catchwords and clichés, and actions in keeping with them. Love is a pretty poor affair in a place like Whitshiels, and ends very quickly as a rule—in a poorer; a little shallow stream soon lost in the morass of marriage. Did the young men realize that a love affair could not take this easy common course with Alice—that her self-contained character meant that she was capable of a great passion—and were they frightened of that, having no deeps with which to speak to such deeps, no ability to live up to anything of the kind? They probably knew it without knowing they knew it—like Alice herself. They kept clear of her at any rate, and it seemed to make no difference to her—she was conscious of no failure, no strange cravings, no hopeless longings. She did not realize that in the life about her she was like one of these rocks that stuck up greyly out of the river that ran past her door but displays strange colours if the waters rise till they flow over it. The waters of life had never submerged Alice.

But all at once the time came when they did. Ted Crozier had a bad name. He had got several girls into trouble. You never knew who he'd be going with next—or how many different ones in the surrounding parishes he'd be having on a string at the same time. Ted was not to be trusted. He had to go further afield nowadays. No girl in Whitshiels would be seen with him. It was more than her reputation was worth. Was it just this scarcity of 'raw material' that

attracted him to Alice—was it because he was tired of easy conquests and wanted to try his skill with the hardest case in the place? Did he suddenly see Alice as a sort of challenge—a final test so far as he was concerned—in Whitshiels at least? He was near the end of his tether; was this to be his crowning triumph—the achievement of the impossible? It must have been the attraction of opposites. Alice and he were soon going together, hot and strong to all appearances. Opinion in the town was sharply divided as to whether it was Alice's inexperience, her lack of previous affairs, her ignorance of his real character through holding herself so aloof, that was responsible for her fall from long-sustained grace—or—or not. The alternative was never defined; some people had a vague suspicion, but they did not formulate it in precise terms—the springs of Alice's nature were too remote and obscure for them. But they were certainly on the right lines. If she had been in any ignorance of Ted's reputation she could not have preserved it long after they were first seen together—plenty of people were at pains to enlighten her (not blurting it out of course—they weren't on terms with her which would allow of anything of the sort—but with innuendoes, double-edged remarks, of all kinds). Alice did not seem to notice or understand any of these hints, and gave none of their makers any encouragement to pursue the matter any further. Alice was certainly no greenhorn; whatever she might have missed in direct personal experience it was impossible for any girl working in one of the Whitshiels tweed mills to remain in any ignorance of 'the facts of life'. Alice's father, mother, and brother were in a different position; they had no hesitation once they realized that it was true, that it was no mere scandal but actual incredible fact that Alice and Ted were walking out together, in giving her their whole minds and vocabularies on the subject. They did their utmost to dissuade her from seeing any more of the fellow—they called her all the hard names they could lay their tongues to—they predicted her inevitable ruin if she failed to accept their advice—they implored her to think of their good name if she had ceased to have any regard for her own. It would be wrong to say that she gave them the feeling that they might as well have spoken to a stone wall. Certainly all they said ran off her like water off a duck's back, without making any impression; they scarcely got a glimmer of her unfamiliar colours, but she listened quietly and reasonably enough to all they had to say, she did not flare up or anything, she did not weep or sulk—but they simply got no further with her, she took in all they said hospitably enough but it produced no result, she just did not discuss the matter with them in any way. That was the maddening thing about Alice; she looked so nice and

natural, she was so obviously one of themselves, there were no oddities about her to lay a finger on—and yet she did not react to anything the way everybody else did. It wasn't that you came up against a blank wall—there was no sense of any impediment, any resistance—you simply seemed to come to the world's edge and fall into the void. The ground disappeared beneath your feet. The thread of your discourse vanished into thin air. You could make nothing of her. Or almost nothing. They did elicit, much to their surprise, one definite statement. It was when they were casting up about the other girls he had ruined. 'He won't do that again,' she said.

As if he could help it! And yet for a long time he seemed a reformed character. There was no breath of his having any other on-goings. So he couldn't be having any—or the news would soon have been out. For people were on the *qui vive*. Ted couldn't get away with anything in Whitshiel's or near it nowadays. Either he was hiding his tracks extremely well—or he had really turned over a new leaf. As to Alice there was little difference except that she seemed to have ripened—to have changed, mellowed inside herself, while presenting an unchanged front, or practically unchanged front, to the world. Then all at once the blow fell. It was a particularly bad business too—Ted's worst yet. Had he had to keep the two extremes going, now that he could no longer have two or more affairs much of a muchness going simultaneously? This would be a criminal case too. The poor little creature would probably die—in any case it would take a Cæsarian operation to deliver her—for he had got a little incomer, a little servant girl from the country, of barely fifteen, in the family way. There was a lot of violent feeling against him in the town. 'He ought to be horse-whipped—he ought to be lynched' were the general sentiments. A few groups of the men were for taking the law into their own hands. Alice's folk could make nothing of her. The sensational news seemed to go into her one ear and out at the other without affecting her in the least. From first to last they never heard her refer to the matter in any way. But they could hardly believe their eyes when they saw her titivating herself that night as usual to go to her tryst with Ted. They tried to stop her but it was no use. It was a devil of a night too—pouring 'auld wives and pipe stapples'. That alone should have kept her in. She'd be drenched to the skin; do water-rats make love?

A gamekeeper found her the following morning at the foot of a tree, under a branch from which Ted was hanging dead.

She said little about it—except that that was their usual trysting place. She had not realized how wild a night it was. Struggling through the

pouring rain against a terrific wind she must have been late for her assignation. It was pitch-black, which had added to her difficulties. All at once stumbling along the slippery clay path she bumped into something which swung away and bounded back into her and swung away again and bounced back once more. She knew at once what it was and fell in a faint below the human pendulum.

Alice's mother knew that her new clothes-rope had mysteriously gone missing, however—but she said nothing about it, and just went and bought another, but not at the same shop.

People were surprised that Alice did not find herself *enceinte*. If she did it was with that as with so many other things—she never showed it. But people knew what Ted had been . . . they were sure . . . so they just remembered how deep still waters run and remarked knowingly that 'Alice knows the ropes'. Which was true—in one sense if not in the other.

F. C. WEISKOPF

SEVEN FRONTIERS

A Story of Carpathian Ukraine

Translated from the German by Charles Ashleigh

CHERNOHOLOVO, the name of the village, really means 'black-headed'. Perhaps it was so called because its cottages, seen from the slopes above, looked like those black-hatted mushrooms the girls gathered in summer and brought to Ivan Galko, the smith in Volovoye. He used to make medicine from them for horses with the cough, or draughts for pregnant women who feared the evil eye.

Or maybe it got its name from the dark firs of the forest which swept round fields and farms as a big river does round islets; from those firs which seemed to reach after clouds from the sky to detain them.

Or was it from the many hydrocephalic children of the village, who so seldom grew up, with their heavy misshapen heads, in which, they say, there is always twilight? But if that was the case, all the other villages, all the way to the frontier range beyond the tableland, should be called Chernoholovo.

The cottages were all alike. Above them hung the whitish-grey smoke from the fires of damp reluctantly burning brushwood. In all of them was the same heavy smell of human beings, goats, of horse-beans cooking without fat, of makhoot, a weed they smoked because tobacco was too dear, and of soup made with oil-cakes and dried fungi. And the people's habits were all the same too. Days went by, grey, monotonous, marked only by Easter, Christmas and shopping-day in the town, Volovoye. Shopping-day was on the last Friday of the month. Simche Rabinovics, the shopkeeper and publican, was always in holiday mood, in expectation of the Sabbath, and sometimes, besides retailing the gossip of the past month, would stand a customer a small glass of spirits. The villagers did not pay cash down for their purchases. Everything was chalked up and the whole reckoning would be paid after six months. In the autumn they would bring Simche the pig which they had been fattening for him and the tax-collector; and in spring they would work off the other six months' debts by cutting wood for him.

It was very seldom that visitors ever came to the village. A whole year might pass between such occasions. The villagers would talk about a stranger's visit for months after, just as they would when one of the village lads returned who had been serving in a Moravian or Bohemian regiment, or building a railway in Slovakia, or tramping the country selling mouse-traps and baskets.

They still told stories about Borkanuk, whose father had emigrated to the States before the war, and who had come back in 1920 to visit his native village. A gentleman with gold teeth and a blonde wife who wore gold-rimmed spectacles and smoked cigarettes. Ever since Borkanuk's visit, whenever someone wanted to express his wonder at something astonishing and unprecedented he would say, 'It's just like when Borkanuk came here from America!'

There were other visits, of course, of which they spoke with fear and hatred. How else would they speak of the tax-collectors who suddenly descended on the village to collect arrears, or of Count Schonborn's foresters who were always coming down to search for stolen fuel or game they had illicitly hunted?

On the other hand, there was never any commotion when Vasil Vasilchuk returned to Chernoholovo after one of his long absences. They hardly noticed him, in fact, when he came to the village or left it. And why should they? Why should anyone bother about Vasil Vasilchuk? He had water on the brain and his tongue moved as awkwardly as his right leg with its club-foot. When he was about to tell you something he would roll his eyes like a she-goat in labour and moan a little at every other word. Hardly anyone ever waited to hear what he had to say. They knew he was either begging for a smoke or trying to tell some crazy story about the forest demons he had met on his wanderings in the hills. He gathered herbs and roots for the apothecary in Bardiov.

The villagers sometimes called him a forest demon, partly because of his stories, partly because of the club-foot, and the old women used his name to frighten the smaller children. But the children soon realized that Vasil was a harmless demon. As soon as he appeared in the village, they would run after him, screeching and flinging stones and dung at him. However, this did not seem to disturb him, any more than the unfriendliness of the adults. He would beg a bite to eat and a place to sleep in someone's goat-shed, and the next day he would be gone as quietly as he had arrived. No sooner had he gone than he was forgotten. Only the children would remember him for a while, and maybe the old grandmothers when they told stories about the forest demons.

That's the way it had been this time too.

Vasil Vasilchuk had drifted into the village with the last gossamer of the dying summer and had stumped out of it again before the first autumn storms. And not one Chernoholovian would have given him a thought until his reappearance next spring or summer, had he not been brought to their minds in a peculiar manner.

In the early October days, while they were fixing up their barns for the winter, a young Czech sergeant-major of gendarmes, assistant to the commandant in Volovoye, came to the village. He had all the adults called to the house of the village headman and then began to question them about two of the village lads who were working in Slovakia. They were Yanko Volotyr and Nikola Krivosub.

He didn't find out much. After all, who was going to tell anything to a stranger, much less a gendarme? Besides the Chernoholovo people didn't know much about the two boys. Yanko Volotyr's girl lived in the village, it was true. Olena Bodnar, her name was. But all she knew was that Yanko was working on the building of the Margecan railway and that he put aside a couple of kronen each week in order to fetch Olena when he had enough saved.

He didn't write her letters. If he had written Olena would have had to take them to the priest to have him read them to her, and the priest asked for three eggs for this service, or even a chicken. She couldn't afford that much, and even if she could she would not have paid it. After all, when the priest read the letter out it would not make the waiting-time any shorter. It was much better to take the chicken to Simche Rabinovics and exchange it for a kettle or something else which would be of use in their future household.

Olena said all this in the headman's house, speaking fast and, of course, in Ukrainian. The gendarme tried his best to follow her but got only every second or third word. He lost his temper and broke up the meeting. A hell of a job up here, he thought, among such people. He snarled at Olena: all right—or perhaps it wasn't all right—but he didn't need her any more, she could go. But Olena stayed there and began to weep. She wanted to know what had happened to Yanko. Please would the sergeant-major kindly tell her, for God's sake! And she wasn't going to leave the place until she knew, she said.

The gendarme, red with anger, drove her out of the room, and, as a couple of her girl friends now joined in, he sent all the women out. Then he let loose upon the men his entire stock of Ukrainian and Slovakian curses, as well as a few Czech ones. Then he instructed them not to talk about anything that had passed at the meeting and to report anything they might hear about Yanko Volotyr and Nikola Krivosub

at once to the gendarmerie barracks in Volovoye. And, as soon as Vasil Vasilchuk appeared, they were to send him there too. It appeared that he had talked about the two lads in Sinevir and Hereyovisce.

He cursed and threatened a bit more and then picked up his carbine, ready to go. One of the Volotyrs, who went up to him to ask whether his relative had really committed a crime, so that the police were after him, got a thump in the ribs. 'What's the idea, asking questions of the authorities?' the sergeant-major said.

And the door banged behind him.

After this the village was like a beehive which has just been visited by a bear.

It was Olena more than anyone else who stirred things up. She spent the whole of the next day going from one cottage to the other trying to persuade them to find Vasil Vasilchuk.

'But there's no sense in that, Olena,' they told her. 'How could we ever find him in the woods? A man's as hard to find in the forest as a flea in a sheepskin coat.'

'Well, did you never catch a flea?'

'Supposing we do find him. What do we do then? You can't make anything out of the stuff he talks. There's nothing in his head but smoke.'

But when a woman really makes up her mind. . . . At last the men started out to look for Vasil.

And they found him. What he told them about Yanko Volotyr and Nikola Krivosub was plain enough, after all, yet they couldn't understand it.

The two lads had left their jobs on the railroad, he said. No, they hadn't been discharged, there had been no trouble. They had left of their own free will.

'And where did they go, Vasil?'

'A long way away, to a foreign country—beyond seven frontiers.'

'What nonsense are you talking now! Vasil, that can't be true?'

'Yes, that's right. A strange country, past seven frontiers.'

'But what do they want to do there, Vasil? Why did they go?'

But Vasil did not answer this question until Olena had pressed him hard. Then he rolled his eyes until only the whites could be seen, and said:

'Well—perhaps there's another war there, my little dove.'

'But Vasil! What are you raving about? A war? Crazy!'

But he said no more, and at last Olena gave up trying to force more out of him. But she did not agree with the men who claimed that they had been right: no one could make any sense out of Vasil's talk' and

Vasil himself least of all: what he had said about the two lads was absolute twaddle. Olena thought that there must be something in this curious story about a foreign land and even about a war somewhere. But, how to arrive at that something?

After this Olena used to listen to the talk of goat-herds, the foresters' children, and anyone who came together with people outside the village, although she went about it secretly so that the men wouldn't laugh at her. And she would ask them whether they had heard of a country beyond seven frontiers. Or of a war. Or of a secret journey made by two lads from the Margecan construction job.

No one could tell her. But she did hear from a gipsy who came from Akna Slatina that one day two or three young men of that place had suddenly left secretly, no one knew where they were going, and that the gendarmes had been inquiring about them too.

At least, this was a clue. Now she must find out more about the men who had disappeared from Akna Slatina. And where could this be done better than in Volovoye, from Simche Rabinovics, who attracted news as a manure-pile attracts flies, who could read the newspaper, and could always give you good advice and help you out of any kind of fix?

At first Olena meant to wait until the next marketing day. But then she realized that, on a marketing day, there would be no chance to talk with Simche without someone from Chernoholovo being around and overhearing. Besides, Simche was much too busy then, selling and showing goods, explaining this or that, handing on the news. There would be no opportunity for a long talk with him. Also Olena felt she could not wait so long.

Next morning then she put on her top-boots—her only legacy from her father, killed in the war—wrapped a piece of maize-cake in a corner of her heavy shawl—which she had inherited from her mother—and told her grandmother that she was going to the swamp to see whether she could find any wild honey, and would not be back before evening.

‘Take the holy martyr’s picture with you, child,’ her grandmother said, ‘or something else to protect you.’

‘Yes, I’ll take something along.’

She snatched up the hen, put it in a basket and started off through the forest for Volovoye.

Simche Rabinovics was standing at the back of his shop, by the hardware, bargaining with two peasants, one old and one young, who wanted to buy some coarse-toothed saw-blades.

When he saw Olena come in, his eyebrows rose for an instant, but

he made no other sign. She could wait; he must first finish this deal. They began their bargaining with an offer of 16 kronen, which Simche countered with a demand for 24. They would almost certainly meet at 20, but it would take a good hour before they arrived at this point. One hour of doughty battle, a tense but precious hour which Simche wouldn't miss for anything. What good was a sale without this measuring of wits against wits? Without all the dodges and stratagems of haggling, the raillery and complaint, the indignant breaking-off of negotiations and their seemingly reluctant resumption, which both parties enjoyed so much? A sale without this accompaniment, Simche would tell you, was like a wedding without a bride, a Sabbath without tranquillity. So Simche wouldn't dream of breaking off just because a girl from Chernoholovo had come in, although his curiosity was aroused at her visit at this time of the month.

'They're too stiff,' contended the old peasant, and rapped on the blade. 'Listen to it, how dull it sounds!'

Simche shrugged contemptuously. His voice almost broke with resentment and scorn.

'They don't sound good! Since when do saws have to ring like silver bells? They're for cutting, not playing music, and they'll cut better than a razor. Still, if you don't want them——'

He broke off and laid hold of the saw-blades as if to put them back on the shelf, but then slipped them a little nearer to his customers. The old peasant scratched his head, silent. The young one answered for him.

'It isn't what we want, it's what we can afford. Twenty-four kronen! All the hard work in the world couldn't raise that much! Listen, Simche, you'll have to come down, d'you hear?'

Apparently Simche did not hear him. He was busy serving a small girl who had come in for a litre and a half of petrol. He carefully measured the fluid into a dented old can. The child paid him and went out. Then, suddenly, the young peasants' words seemed to strike through to his consciousness. He turned back to the two of them.

'Come down—I've always got to come down! And how do you think I'm going to live? Especially in these days. Well, tell me what you think you ought to pay.'

The lad was about to speak but the old man laid his hand upon his mouth. 'Seventeen,' he said. 'Not a groschen more. That's the limit.'

But Simche just pursed up his lips and made a mild clucking sound, then gazed abstractedly at the 'snake' which hung over the old peasant's head, as though he had lost all interest in the affair.

The 'snake' a coarsely carved wooden serpent, as is used in such stores for displaying hanging goods, had once been painted blue and green at its head and tail, with an orange and yellow belly. But the colour had worn off. To Olena, however, the 'snake', with its hanging lamp-wicks, whip-cords, straps, bootlaces and glass-bead necklaces, was as richly admirable as all the rest of Simche's store. What a shop! Olena had been there before, of course, but always on marketing-days when there had been so much hustle, crowding and noise that she had had no chance really to look around. But now it was different, and she was glad that Simche was so busy with the two peasants. Everything was in this marvellous spacious dimly lit place which smelt of plum-brandy, petrol, fish-brine and many other things she could not name.

A finger on Olena's shoulder, and she turned as if awakened from sleep.

It was Srull Zipper, the truck driver. She had not heard him come in. For some time Srull had not been working. A car wheel had run over his foot and crushed the big toe, and he was waiting for the hearing of his compensation case. In the meantime he limped about the streets, sometimes helping the shopkeepers by praising their wares.

Srull wanted to know what Olena was doing in Volovoye, right at the beginning of the month and all alone. She wanted to sell the hen? And why? Was she expecting her young man perhaps? That tall black-haired boy, wasn't it, who was working on the railroad at Margecan? Oh, he'd disappeared, had he? He also! And she'd come to ask Simche Rabinovics's advice? *Oi, oi! Quiet!*

Srull had lowered his voice at these last words and had signed to Olena to keep quiet. But it was too late.

His face suddenly flushed, his beard awry, the wide sleeves of his caftan fluttering like bat's wings, Simche Rabinowics rushed at them. This was no place for chattering loafers, he shouted to Srull. He would be doing a kindness by taking his conversation elsewhere. He knew where the door was.

Then it was Olena's turn.

'What are you doing here? I don't want your hen. And if you only came here to ask me about some vagabonds of your acquaintance who've run away from somewhere you can save yourself the trouble, my girl! I know nothing about such people and I don't want to know.'

He hustled them out of the store. On the street Srull clicked his tongue and grimaced ruefully at the door.

'Didn't you know he has ears that hear everything? And now you've reminded him that his Jankel has gone over there too!'

He saw Olena looking at him with widely staring uncomprehending eyes, her mouth open, utterly puzzled, and he had to laugh.

‘You remember his son, Jankel?’ he explained. ‘Well, he went over there too, just like your boy and those from Akna Slatina—did you know some had gone from there too? If anybody mentions it in front of old Simche he goes crazy. I tried to make you shut up.’

But Olena was still dazed at the abruptness of Simche’s attack. Srull had to explain it all over again before she understood. Then she asked him where this place was, ‘over there’, where her Yanko and the others had gone. But the news was too precious for Srull to divulge it all at once. He wanted to savour its gradual revelation.

‘Where have they gone?’ he repeated after her, drawlingly. ‘How should I know where they’ve gone?’

He almost shut his eyes and looked at Olena, his head on one side. Suddenly Olena felt weak and helpless. She had to sit on the step before the shop door. So then Srull bent down and whispered in her ear. That was where they had gone. . . .

The news set the whole village talking excitedly. Yanko Volotyr and Nikola Krivosub had gone to a foreign country, in the south somewhere, Spain it was called, and there was a war on there.

So old Vasil Vasilchuk had been right with his story about a journey over seven borders? And right about the boys going to war, too. This was something really big, bigger than when Borkanuk had come from America!

Everyone—the men, the women, the youngsters—got together that evening in Miter Sedoryak’s house that had a bigger room than any other in Chernoholovo.

‘We must find out what kind of war this is, that they’ve got into,’ shouted Miter Sedoryak, so that everyone else was suddenly still.

‘Must we? Why?’ challenged Kyrill Grib, Sedoryak’s neighbour and ancient rival. But Sedoryak had an answer ready.

‘Because when two lads from our village go to war, it’s our war as well. So we have to have news of it—or don’t we?’

They all agreed except Grib who just stood there growling a bit. Sedoryak turned to Olena.

‘Didn’t they tell you anything else about the war, down in Volo-voye?’ he asked.

No, that was all Srull had told her, and she had been too upset to ask for details, at the time. But she could go down to the town again to-morrow and find out, Olena said.

'No,' said Miter, 'a man will have to go. War's a matter for men anyway, and a new broom sweeps better than an old one.'

It was Miter Serdoyak himself who went to town the next day. When he came back he brought a newspaper with him.

'It's all written here, what the people in the town know about the war,' he said. Once again his house was crowded. They pressed round to look at the paper he had placed on the table. But no one could read.

"We know just what we knew before," mocked Kyrill Grib. "Or did you learn to read while you were in town, Miter?"

'You know I can't read, any more than you can,' answered Miter calmly. 'But that doesn't matter. I got the paper—that's one thing. Reading it is another. Each man to his task. The priest will read it to us.'

'And he'll do it for nothing, of course!' sneered Grib. 'If you believe that, my friend—! He won't even let you die for nothing!'

'I shall just tell him,' said Miter, undisturbed, 'that it is necessary that the whole village knows what is written here, and that it's his duty to read it to us.'

'You think you can fool him like that? Why he can smell roast mutton before the sheep is killed.'

Olena could no longer bear this wrangling.

'What if it does cost something,' she cried. 'You won't have to give anything, you old miser!'

'Listen how careless of her gold she's become!' said Grib. 'One would think you were rich, little one! Better to keep your few trifles. Who knows whether your runaway will ever come back for you?'

Olena raised her hand to strike him, but Miter stepped between them.

'We're not going to fight now,' he said. 'We're going to the priest, and that's an end of it!'

He chose the villagers who were to accompany him. One Krivosub, one Volotyr, one Borkanuk, and old Yuray Metko, of whom it was said that he was tougher than leather and had a longer wind than Simche Rabinovics. Four men—and himself, five. Just the right number.

'And I?' asked Olena.

Miter looked at her, astonished. A girl wanted to go with them? As though five men were not enough? He was going to tell her to stay and wait with the others and not to mix up in men's business. But then it occurred to him that she had stood before him once before

like this, flushed with eagerness and excitement, when she insisted that the men should seek out Vasil Vasilchuk in the woods. They had thought her forward and foolish then too, but later it had been proved that she had not been so wrong, after all. Perhaps it might be worth letting her have her way? She had courage, and people always said: 'Scare the devil with holy water and the priest with a woman's tongue.'

He swallowed the refusal which was almost upon his lips, and said:

'Well, if it means so much to you, come along!'

They had already started off for the priest's house when Kyrill Grib came running after them.

'If Olena's going with you, so am I,' he panted angrily. He eyed Miter challengingly, but the leader merely raised his eyebrows and motioned to him to come along.

Grib had expected an argument and was disappointed. He followed them a few steps and then stopped.

'There's no sense in it,' he said. But no one even turned round.

The priest was furious.

For two hours he had been reading to his six unexpected visitors, and had been enlarging upon what he had read. He had explained what was happening in Spain. It was Antichrist who was fighting there, leading Satan's red hordes who destroyed churches, burned down farms, impaled priests and threw nuns into boiling oil. And now, when he had finished and asked them if they had really understood everything, old Yuray Metko had said:

'Well, reverend father, there is one thing I can't understand. Why should peasants—and you said that peasants were there among them—why should peasants burn down farms?'

'Because,' said the priest, his voice grating rather with impatience, 'they are possessed by the devil. Because the robbers have turned their heads! Because they're as wooden-headed as you are!'

He was silent, waiting for an answer. The others all looked at old Metko too, but he just sat there, as though he had not heard, looking out of the window.

What was he looking at?

Was it perhaps the snow on the opposite slopes which would melt next spring, carrying the sparse soil down the sides? Could he see the peasants carrying their soil up the slope again upon their backs? Was it the wild boars he could see which broke out of the forest in summer and fell glutonously upon their scanty crops, as brazenly confident

as though they were aware that the peasants did not dare shoot or trap them, for fear of the count's rangers?

Could the old man see that, and was he also remembering the smouldering feudal manor-houses and hunting lodges, set on fire by Nikla Shuhay, that great robber whom the priests and gendarmes also called a son of Satan and a murderer, but who was feared only by the rich and loved by the poor as a friend and benefactor?

To the astonishment of the priest and of his companions Yuray Metko suddenly got up, saying:

'It's no use sitting here listening to fine words. We must find out why farms are being burnt in Spain.'

'But I've told you why,' said the priest angrily. 'And that's what it says in the newspaper.' He stared rancorously at Yuray. But the old man was unmoved.

'Perhaps the newspaper lies, reverend father,' he said. 'Or perhaps it doesn't know the truth. You once told us that only God knows the truth about everything.' He turned to the others. 'Let us go,' he said. 'And perhaps we can learn the truth elsewhere.'

'You'll fall into the devil's hands if you do,' the priest threatened.

The men hesitated but Olena went over and stood by the old man's side.

'He's right,' she said. 'Let's go.'

They left the house. Once outside, Olena asked:

'Who will find out the truth about this? You, Yuray?'

Yuray nodded.

'And where will you find it?'

Yuray raised his right hand and indicated vague distances.

'Does the fox know in advance where he will catch the rabbit? Just let me go and try.'

He left Chernoholovo and returned in three days. He went at once to Miter Sedoryak's house. He would not answer his questions but told him first to bring the village people to his house. Grumbling at Yuray's reticence, Miter did as he was asked. But when they had all assembled and Yuray began to speak, he forgot his annoyance. The old man had indeed brought news.

In Spain, Yuray told them, the peasants had taken back their land from the landlords and were ploughing it, but now the masters wished to seize it again and to drive the peasants back into starvation and bondage. Therefore there was war.

The masters, he told them, were fighting the people of the land with the help of foreign soldiers, Romans, Germans, and even black men called Moors from over the sea—infidels they were who were being

forced to fight Christians. The masters had better weapons than the peasants, so that the peasants needed help. So Yanko Volotyr and Nikola Krivosub had gone to their help and were fighting with them. Old Yuray looked at them all for a moment in silence.

‘So you see, brothers,’ he said, ‘this war in Spain is no quarrel between unknown men. It is not a fight which does not concern our village. This war is a war of people like our people here in Chernoholovo. It is our affair, and we must know how it is going. This we must do for our own sakes, and for the sakes of our two lads who are fighting there, and for the sakes of our brothers, the peasants of Spain.’

They waited on his words, still silent. But he had told his tale.

‘Am I right?’ he asked.

‘Right!’ said Miter Sedoryak.

‘Right!’ they all cried then, even Kyrill Grib.

They decided to send someone to Volovoye for news of the war, as often as possible, at least once a week.

The first week, the journey to the town was easy for their courier, but by the second there came a heavy fall of snow which made his return to the village difficult.

‘What will you do when the snow-drifts make it impossible to travel?’ Srull Zipper asked Olena and Yuray when they arrived in Volovoye on the third week, in spite of ice and fog. Srull Zipper’s compensation case was still undecided, so he had plenty of time to concern himself with other people’s troubles.

‘Perhaps it’ll be over by then,’ said Olena hesitantly.

Srull laughed, half mockingly, half sympathetically.

‘A real war never ends as quickly as that, even if it ever ends,’ he told them.

For a while he regarded Olena’s dismay, and then continued. You couldn’t reckon on an early end to this war, he repeated. But he had a proposal to make to them. A plan which would enable them to find out every day how the war was going—however bad the weather—and therefore what was happening to the two lads from the village. If they would promise him a quarter-litre of brandy and two young hens he would tell them his plan. Of course, they need not give it to him until it was successfully carried out.

Yuray was shaking his head doubtfully, but Olena said:

‘Good, we’ll give it you, Srull. What is your idea?’

The old man continued to shake his head while Srull told them of his plan. But Olena said they ought to try it. It was true, she said, that it sounded strange, unbelievable. But was not the whole story of

Yanko and Nikola and the war unbelievable at first? And why should not the Spaniards send their message to Chernoholovo, when the village could send them its young men as soldiers? One could at least try it. And it was true that soon the great snow-drifts would be piling up, and what would they do then for news?

'Right,' said Srull. 'Let's try it, at any rate. Let's go now to Simche Rabinovics and make the deal.'

Unexpectedly, Simche wanted nothing to do with the affair. Was it not enough, he said, that his undutiful son, Jankel, had got himself mixed up in this business, a business which affected a Rabinovics of Volovoye as little as the feud between the miracle-working rabbi of Belz and the High Rav of Sadagura affected the Pope? Why use Jankel's radio-box to drive these Chernoholovo people—who had already got this Spanish business far too much on their minds—completely mad? And what had this good-for-nothing Srull to do with any business between the Chernoholovo people and him, Simche Rabinovics? No, nothing could be done, and they would please forget it.

This was the beginning. And here the matter might have rested had it not been for Olena's passionate and unwavering insistence. An hour passed and another, until Simche's resistance broke. The deal was made. Simche was to receive three hens and the promise of ten days' wood-cutting next spring, and Chernoholovo got the radio.

Simche wrote down the Chernoholovo debt upon the slate that hung behind the counter. Then he climbed up and fetched the radio set down from the top shelf.

He placed it upon the counter before Olena and Yuray and they looked at it expectantly. Straining their ears they almost thought they sensed a tiny mysterious voice within it. No, it was silent.

'Well, here it is,' Simche said.

Simche could not restrain a dig at Srull.

'You must find someone to show you how to work it,' he said. 'If he can!'

But Srull did not even glance at him. He lifted the box to his shoulder, beckoned to Yuray and Olena, and walked out. It had already been arranged that he would himself bring the box to Chernoholovo and would show them how to make it speak. Only then would he receive his two hens and his quarter of brandy.

Simche Rabinovics went to the door of his shop and stood there looking at the three of them as they walked away, Srull in front carrying the box as proudly as though he were bearing loaves of shew-bread to the Temple of Moses.

'That *ganeff!*'

His desire for a last cut at Srull overcame his dignity. He raised his hollowed hand to his mouth and shouted:

'Hi, there, you from Chernoholovo! Don't let that old sinner cheat you! Watch him close!'

But Srull kept right on, replying only with an unmistakable gesture which invited Simche to the performance of a highly undignified function. Olena and Yuray laughed.

Simche's face was mottled red and he strained for air. He spat forcefully and strode back into his store. A lousy crowd! But he was convinced that the Chernoholovo people and Srull would eventually come to blows over this business.

And they nearly did. When, after a good deal of mysterious tinkering, Srull finally got the box to speak, no one could understand what it was saying. It was a harsh disappointment for the tensely expectant Chernoholovians.

'It's a fraud!' shouted Kyrill Grib. 'He's cheated us! Was it for this we have to give him a quarter of brandy and two hens? No, what he wants is a couple of good slaps on the head, and then down the slope with him, box and all!'

Most of them agreed. It was only because Miter Sedoryak and Yuray Metko interceded for him that Srull and his miracle-box escaped a mobbing. As soon as Srull felt safe again, he talked to them and talked fast.

'You can't understand what it says? Of course you can't! That only goes to prove I haven't lied to you. If you could understand it, it wouldn't be Spanish, would it? Isn't that so, Miter?'

'That's true,' said Miter. The others also had to agree—all except Kyrill Grib.

'What's the use of the box if we can't understand it?' he grumbled. 'Suppose it is the Spaniards speaking. How do we know whether the news is good or bad?'

There was no answer to this, one would think, but Srull produced one. He stopped playing with the box and rose from his stool to speak to them.

'It's true,' he said, 'that there's no news we can understand. But in Volovoye we had news, and what use was it to us? Was it not full of lies? How often have we heard that Madrid has fallen to the rebel landlords? Four times, five times? No, we can find something more reliable than news, I tell you. There's one way of knowing whether Madrid has fallen or not. And we don't need to understand Spanish

for this. It's a song—a song that the peasants and their comrades sing in Spain. A fighting song. This song comes from Madrid every day at the same hour. So long as this song comes, the city stands. If once you don't hear it, the worst has happened, the city has fallen.'

With a proud smile Srull looked at his old silver watch. He had been waiting for this moment.

'The song comes every evening, between twilight and nightfall. It's almost time now. I'll find it for you. You shall hear it.'

He bent over the box and began to turn the knobs. Nothing could be heard but the crackling of the radio and the slow breathing of the crowd. Then again that foreign voice, but louder. Then, after two long minutes, while the people stirred cautiously, the song. A strange melody, sustained but electric, calling to battle and announcing victory, the Riego March, hymn of the Spanish Republic.

'There you are,' said Srull, and something besides pride in his own success thrilled in his voice. 'There it is. Whenever you hear this song you'll know that Yanko and Nikola and the others are fighting well. All you have to do every evening, after feeding the goats, is to turn this little lever to the right. Just so far, no more. And gently. Look, like this. And when the song is finished, turn it back again to the left. See? Don't touch any other thing. Understand? Now, watch once more. Like this, see? Now try it for yourselves.'

It worked. And Srull Zipper packed his bottle and his hens into the sack he had brought, and went back to town.

Every evening now the villagers would meet in Miter Sedoryak's house to wait for the song. Sometimes it was very loud and clear, as though from the barn or doorway rather than from beyond seven frontiers.

'There can't be much happening down there to-day,' Yuray Metko would say then, remembering quiet days on the Tyrolean front during the Great War. 'The others aren't sending anything across and you can take your time in the latrine, and play cards, or delouse your shirt.'

Other times they could hardly make out the tune. It was almost drowned by a wild roaring and rattling. Old Yuray would nod understandingly.

'Pretty heavy,' he would say. 'Like at Isonzo, when the Italians were sending over heavy stuff and you didn't dare stick your nose out. A lousy business! Still, I came through it and so can others.'

But whether clear or muffled it came to them every evening, the song from Madrid, 'our song' as they soon called it. It told them that this city—which now seemed as familiar as Volovoye

or Sinnevir, and which was perhaps nearer their hearts—was standing fast.

It went on this way for weeks. From time to time Srull Zipper came to the village to 'give the box something to eat', unscrewed and screwed it up again.

The news brought by Srull about the war, or what they heard from Simche Rabinovics on marketing-day, merely confirmed the song's message. Madrid still stood. It was a hard and bloody war but the rebel landlords came no further, despite the help of their Romans, Germans and Moors. More and more the Chernoholovians came to trust their song. It was more than a messenger. It was a friend.

Then one day, in the latter half of January, the song failed.

They did not turn the little lever back when the accustomed time had passed, but sat on until midnight. The next evening again the song did not come. When it failed on the third day also there was panic in Chernoholovo. There was danger threatening their city, threatening Yanko and Nikola. Was the war, their war, lost? They must know for certain. The villagers decided that the next day a delegation from the village should leave for Volovoye, taking the box with them. Miter Sedoryak, Yuray Metko, Olena and one or two others were appointed.

When the delegation met the following morning outside Sedoryak's house, the population of Chernoholovo was also gathered there, and, young and old, some who were sick, and even some women, they insisted on coming along. There was no stopping them.

The weather that day was savage. The delegation walked ahead, and then, in a long double line, the rest of the villagers. It looked just like one of the pilgrims' processions to some well-known shrine, customary in this country. As a matter of fact, the women were singing the hymns they sang on Corpus Christi Day.

Everything went well enough for the first few hours, and they made good time. Then a hard-driving blizzard came, robbing them of sight and breath, and the onward struggle was a tough one.

By noon they had come only half way, and the storm was as violent as ever. Most of the women and a few of the men now decided to turn back.

But the rest of them—still some thirty—went on. The rapidly piling snow-drifts compelled them continually to seek new paths, but they kept at it, silent now, heads down, with a sort of stunned determination.

Late in the afternoon they arrived in the town, and proceeded to look for Srull Zipper. But he was not in Volovoye. At last his compensation case was being heard, and he had been summoned to court

at Uzhorod. The Chernoholovians went on to Simche Rabinovics's shop. When they arrived they found Simche at the door, just about to lock up.

Yuray and Miter asked him to look at the radio, but he refused.

'On a Friday evening you come to me!' he cried indignantly. 'Are you all mad? I won't look at anything, test anything, now. It's the Sabbath. Come back to-morrow evening.'

So definitely and finally had Simche spoken that neither Yuray nor Miter dared argue. But Olena stepped forward and hesitantly asked whether it was not possible to postpone the Sabbath just the least little bit, just a quarter of an hour, for example?

'Postpone *Shabbas*?' said Simche, his anger mounting. 'Has anyone ever heard the like? D'you think I'm Joshua who made the sun stand still?'

Suddenly he was silent.

Joshua? Was not Joshua the other name of his son Jankel? And was not Jankel in that city also, that city of which these men from Chernoholovo spoke?

The city was in danger. Perhaps even now it was in the enemy's hands? Perhaps even now its defenders were being slaughtered?

My boy left secretly, thought old Simche. And against my will. But he is my son. Perhaps even now he is wounded or dying, calling for me. Can I rejoice in the Sabbath?

So speedy and masterful was old Simche then that the Chernoholovians could hardly tell you afterwards how it happened. But within a minute they were all standing crowded in Simche's parlour, lit by the seven Sabbath candles.

Simche was feverishly manipulating the knobs. For a desperately long time he turned them this way and that. Then at last, at first so low you could hardly seize it, the song came through. Simche stood upright, looked at them sternly, and said in an unrecognizably harsh voice:

'There you are. And now be off, the lot of you. Now, at last, it is my Sabbath.'

That same evening they walked back to Chernoholovo. It was very dark and the snowstorm still raged. But yet the way back seemed easier than their earlier journey.

They took it in turns to carry the box. It was silent now, but yet the song sang within it, or was it within their hearts that it sang—the strange melody, calling to battle, so certain, they felt, of eventual victory, at some time, in spite of passing defeat.

